QUESTIONS ON VOCATIONS

241

BY A PRIEST OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

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QUESTIONS

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ON

VOCATIONS:

A CATECHISM

PRINCIPALLY FOR

PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS,

ACADEMIES AND COLLEGES.

BY A PRIEST

OF THE

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION.

(Founded by St. Vincent de Paul.)

WITH AN APPENDIX ON

How Parishes May Establish Scholarships.

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By D. J. DOWNING.

Rev. Dear Father :

Your work on "Vocations" has received the endorsement and approval of men competent to appreciate and to judge.

I have no hesitation in joining with them and in commending the book. I am sure it will amply serve the purpose intended. I recommend it especially to young men among whom we expect to discover recruits for the Priesthood.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

J. Card. Gibbons.

BISHOP RYAN'S APPROBATION.

I cordially approve the little Manual entitled : Questions on Vocations.

The brief, but practical manner in which the important subject of Vocations is herein treated, cannot fail to be of great advantage to many, especially to those who have neither the time nor the opportunity for reading more extensive works.

I especially recommend that part of the Work treating of Vocations to the priesthood, in which attention is very appropriately called to the teachings of the Fathers of the Second, as well as the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, on the manner and the importance of fostering vocations.

✠ S. V. Ryan,

Bishop of Buffalo.

1657

BISHOP SPALDING'S APPROBATION.

Dear Father:

I have looked through your "Questions on Vocations," and like the little Book very much. It will lead young men to reflect seriously on a matter which is of vital importance to their temporal and eternal welfare. It will, I am sure, be received with gratitude by the heads of our Catholic Colleges.

I am very sincerely yours,

✠ J. L. SPALDING,
Bishop of Peoria.

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PREFACE.

We offer this brief apology for the publication of this little Book : Providence has placed us in circumstances enabling us to ascertain that the Catholic doctrine of Vocations is not well understood, either by children or by their parents. Therefore a practical little catechism on this subject cannot fail to be a great advantage to many. A correct knowledge of Vocations affords a safeguard against many evils, and proves a source of innumerable blessings. By the proper instruction in this matter, many youths are prevented from rashly entering states of life for which they are unfitted, and to which they are not called; whilst others are encouraged to tread the higher and holier paths pointed out to them by the finger of God.

The doctrine herein contained is not our own ; it is that of the Divine Master, of St. Paul, of the Fathers, of Councils, and of approved Theologians. Yet, to collect this doctrine from its various sources, and to place it in the form here presented, required many an anxious hour of careful study.

If this little Work should become instrumental in directing even one youth into the way of his true vocation, or if it should be the occasion of inducing some abler person to treat the subject more usefully, the Author will be amply repaid.

QUESTIONS ON VOCATIONS.

DEFINITION OF VOCATION.

Q. What is meant by the word Vocation?

A. Vocation means a call from God to some particular state of life. The word Vocation signifies also the state itself to which God calls us.

The great Theologian, Suarez, thus defines a vocation: "It is a fixed manner of living, established to preserve grace in this world, and to obtain glory in the world to come."

CHAPTER I.

EVERY PERSON HAS SOME SPECIAL VOCATION.

Q. Is every person destined to pursue some particular vocation?

A. Most certainly: God marks out some special vocation for each individual.

Q. How is this doctrine proved?

A. Speaking of this subject, St. Paul says: "Every one hath his proper gift from God;

one after this manner, and another after that." I. Cor. VII, 7. Interpreters of Sacred Scripture say that these words of the Apostle mean a state of life, or a vocation; because such is the nature of St. Paul's discourse in this place. A little further on in the same chapter, the Apostle makes his meaning still more unmistakable: "*As* the Lord hath distributed to *every one*, as God *hath called every one*, *so* let him walk." Again: "He gave some (to be) apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying (building up) of the body (Church) of Christ."[1]

Reason leads to the same conclusion; for, intelligent men use special means to accomplish their designs. The machinist does not make countless pieces of machinery, and throw them together indiscriminately; he has some *particular use* for each piece, as well as a definite end to be accomplished by the whole machine. The farmer has a precise use for every farming implement that he buys; and the implement intended for one purpose, is not necessarily good for another purpose.

[1] Ephes. iv. 11.

Now, if God has not some particular state of life in view for each individual, as well as a common end to be finally attained by all, he would be acting less intelligently than men act.

Q. Is it not beneath God's notice to mark out a particular vocation for each person?

A. Not at all; for, not even a sparrow is forgotten before God. "Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; you are of *more value* than many *sparrows.*" [1]

The sun and moon, and the stars of heaven were created for special purposes; even the very animals, as well as every object in nature, have their mission to fulfil. It would be absurd, then, to think that those nobler creatures made to the image and likeness of God, should have no special place in the economy of creation. Men are destined for a common end, but they are not destined for a common way of reaching that end. "There is a way which *seemeth* just to a man; but the ends thereof lead to death." [2]

Q. Can you give any other proof that every one has a special vocation?

[1] Luke xii. 6, 7 [2] Prov. xiv. 12.

A. Yes ; Father Faber says : "Every man has a distinct vocation." The following quotation from St. Liguori, contains four authorities on this subject ; namely, that of St. Liguori himself, of St. Cyprian, of Cornelius A Lapide, and of St. Paul. "If, in the choice of a state of life, we wish to secure our eternal salvation, we must embrace that state to which God calls us ; in which alone God prepares for us the efficacious means necessary to our salvation. For, as St. Cyprian says : 'The Grace of the Holy Spirit is given according to the order of God, and not accoding to our own will ;' and therefore St. Paul writes, 'every one has his proper gift from God' : that is, as Cornelius A Lapide explains it, God gives to every one his vocation, and chooses the state in which he wills him to be saved."

CHAPTER II.

NECESSITY OF FOLLOWING A VOCATION.

Q. Are we obliged to follow that vocation which God has in store for us ?

A. Yes ; because theologians teach that, if

[1] See St. Liguori ; Ascetical Works, Vol. III, Page 381.

we willfully neglect to follow the vocation which God marks out for us, we expose ourselves to imminent danger of losing our souls.

Q. What reason do theologians give for this doctrine?

A. When God chooses a particular state of life for us, he places in that state all those special graces which are necessary to enable us to discharge properly the obligations of that state, and to resist the temptations to be met there-in. Hence, if we neglect that vocation, we deprive ourselves of those special graces which God provided for us; we then easily fall into temptation; and thus we are more liable to lose our souls.

Q. Can you quote reliable authority for this doctrine?

A. Yes; many of the authorities proving that we *have a special vocation*, prove also that there is an obligation of FOLLOWING that vocation. Such is the authority we have just quoted from St. Liguori: "If, in the choice of a state of life, *we wish to secure our eternal salvation, we must embrace* that state to which God calls us; in which *only*, God prepares for us the efficacious means necessary to salvation."

St. Cyprian says: "The grace of the Holy Ghost is given according to the *order of God*, and not according to *our own will*."

In another place, St. Liguori says: "It is evident that our eternal salvation depends principally on the choice of our state of life." [1]

St. Vincent de Paul says: "It is very difficult, not to say impossible, to save one's self in a place, or in a state, in which God does not wish one to be."

Q. Has any one of the popes given his views on this subject?

A. Yes; a great and learned Pope, who is also a Saint; namely, Pope Saint Gregory the Great, teaches us in unmistakable terms, that our salvation is closely connected with the state of life for which God has destined us.

The Emperor Maurice having published an Edict forbidding soldiers to enter the religious state, Pope St. Gregory wrote to him these remarkable words: "This law, forbidding soldiers to enter the religious state, is unjust, because it shuts heaven to many; for, there are very many who cannot enter heaven unless they abandon all things." These are the exact words

[1] The quotations from St. Liguori are from his Ascetical Works, Vol. III. except where special reference is made to his Theology, or to the Homo Apostolicus.

of the Saint: "Nam, plerique sunt qui, nisi omnia reliquerint, salvari nullatenus possunt."[1]

The learned Habert, quoted by St. Liguori, says: "although he who chooses a state of life to which God has not called him, may (absolutely speaking) be saved in it, yet he hardly will be saved; for he will be like a member of the human body out of joint, which can perform its functions only with great difficulty"; then St. Liguori continues: "So he who, neglecting a divine vocation to the religious state, remains in the world, will hardly be saved; because God will refuse to give him in the world, those abundant helps which he had prepared for him in religion; and, although (absolutely speaking) he could be saved without these helps, yet, without them he will never be saved."[2]

Q. Can this doctrine be explained by a comparison?

A. Yes; the above becomes clear by this comparison: A master feels a just indignation against those servants who do as they please, and neglect the particular duty assigned to

[1] See Homo Apostolicus of St. Liguori. Tract 13; No. 26.
[2] See Homo Apostolicus; Tract 15; No. 26.

them. The work done by such servants may be very good in itself; yet it is not pleasing to the master, nor will it be rewarded by him, because it is not in accordance with his designs.

The same principle holds with regard to God: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." [1]

Q. If the question of vocation is so important as to be closely interwoven with eternal salvation, what is to be said of the vast number of people who know nothing about vocation, or who have given this subject very little thought?

A. We answer, first: if they are ignorant of the matter without any fault on their part, God will not hold them responsible for such ignorance. Many of these people are in their proper sphere by providential circumstances without their own advertence. Secondly, we answer with St. Liguori: "In the world this doctrine of vocation is not much studied by some persons. They think it to be all the same whether they live in the state to which

God calls them, or in that which they choose of their own inclination; and therefore so many live bad lives and damn themselves. But it is *certain* that this is the principal point with regard to the acquisition of eternal life. He who disturbs this order, and breaks this chain of salvation will not be saved. With all his labors, and with all the good he may do, St. Augustine will tell him, 'Thou runnest well, but out of the way'; that is, out of the way in which God has called thee to walk for attaining to salvation.

"The Lord does not accept the sacrifices offered to him merely from our own inclination; 'but to Cain and his offerings he had no respect'. Rather he threatens with great chastisements those who, when he calls them, turn their backs on him in order to follow the whim of their own caprice. 'Woe to you, apostate children, saith the Lord, that you would take counsel, and not of me; and would begin a web, and not by my spirit.'"[1]

Q. What is the remarkable saying of St. Gregory Nazianzen on this subject?

A. St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "I hold that the choice of a state of life is so import-

[1] Isa. xxx. 1.

ant, that it decides, for the remainder of our life, whether our conduct will be good or bad."

CHAPTER III.

EXAMPLES, SHOWING THE MISFORTUNE OF NOT FOLLOWING THE CALL OF GOD.

Q. Can you give examples showing the misfortune of not following a vocation?

A. Yes; the following examples are both useful and interesting.

SAD DEATH OF A STUDENT.

In the Chapter from which we have just quoted, St. Liguori relates this striking example: "There was in the Roman college a youth of great talents. Whilst making the spiritual retreat, he asked his confessor whether it was a sin not to correspond with a vocation to the religious life. The confessor replied that in itself it was not a grievous sin, because this is a thing of counsel and not of precept; yet, that a person would expose

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his salvation to great danger, as had happened to many, who for this reason were finally damned. The young man did not obey the call. He went to study in Macerata, where he soon began to neglect prayer and Holy Communion, and finally gave himself up to a bad life. Soon after, coming one night from the house of a wicked woman, he was mortally wounded by a rival ; certain priests ran to his assistance ; but, before they arrived, the unfortunate young man expired at the door of the very college where he had disregarded the call of God. By this circumstance, God wished to show that this chastisement came upon him for having neglected his vocation."

THE TEMPTED NOVICE.

"Remarkable, also," continues St. Liguori, "is the vision of a novice who had resolved on leaving his Order. He saw Christ on a throne in wrath, ordering his name to be blotted out of the book of life. By this vision he was so terrified that he persevered in his vocation." The Saint continues : "How many unhappy youths shall we see damned on the day of judgment for not having followed their voca-

tion. Such are rebels to divine light, as the Holy Ghost says: 'They have been rebellious to the light, they have not known his way'; and they will be justly punished by losing the light. Because they would not walk in the way shown them by the Lord, they shall walk without light in that chosen by their own caprice, and perish."

St. Augustine says: "They who have despised the will of God who invited them, shall feel the will of God when it becomes its own avenger."

Striking Example Related by St. Francis Xavier.

THE DROWNING YOUNG MAN.

When about to embark for the Indies, in 1546, St. Francis Xavier writes the following striking letter to his confreres in Rome:

"During our travels in Italy, God deigned to manifest to us in a miraculous manner his protection over one of the companions of our journey. This man whom you knew at Rome as the servant of the Ambassador, had formerly taken the resolution of entering the religious state; but having delayed the ex-

ecution of his resolution through slothfulness and indifference, he finally lost sight of it altogether. A deep and wide torrent having presented itself in our journey, his rashness led this young man to try to ford the stream. Disregarding our remonstrances on the danger of the attempt, he spurred his horse and plunged into the torrent. After a few steps, both the horse and rider were suddenly swept away to a great distance by the rapidity of the current. The banks resounded with our cries; and it would have been all over with this unfortunate young man, had not God heard our prayers. We saw him come forth suddenly, by a striking miracle, from that abyss where death awaited him.

"Afterwards he declared to me that, at the moment in which he felt himself overwhelmed by the waves, he sincerely desired from his heart that he had entered a monastery. He felt, by burning regrets, that he had been unfaithful to his vocation, and that he had neglected a grace which, at that supreme hour, he desired so much to recover.

"He also declared to me that, in a circumstance so critical, he was more torn by remorse, than terrified by the danger which threatened

him. His conscience reproached him bitterly for having passed his life without thinking seriously of death; and that which tormented him most, he said, was that he had rejected his vocation to the religious state.

"It was full of these thoughts that he was restored to us, to teach us not to follow his example. His pale and almost lifeless figure, like that of one escaped from the lower regions, gave to his words a terrifying expression. When he spoke to us of the pains of the other life, one would imagine, from his words, and from his voice, that he had just come forth from the eternal flames of hell.

"The language of this man, which was not the result of reading, or of meditation, or of study, but of personal experience, was of vivid and astonishing interest to all the companions of our journey. For my part, when I think of it, I am profoundly moved by the indifference of so many people whom I know, and who defer so long the execution of good thoughts and holy desires of giving themselves to God. I tremble in thinking how the opportunity escapes them, and that they cannot do later that which they so often desired."[1]

[1] S. F. Xav. Ep. 3.

VARIOUS KINDS OF VOCATIONS.

Q. How many kinds of vocations or states of life, are there?

A. Theologians generally mention four; namely, Matrimony, Virginity, the Religious state, and the Priesthood.

CHAPTER IV.

MATRIMONY: IS IT A VOCATION?

Q. How do you show that Matrimony is a vocation?

A. Because Matrimony evidently comes under the definition of vocation: It is a fixed manner of living, established by Almighty God, to preserve grace in this world, and to obtain glory in the world to come. "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."[1] "This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church."[2]

Q. If Matrimony is a vocation, or state of life established by Almighty God, why are the lives of many married people so unhappy?

A. Because many of these people do not

[1] Matt. xix. 6. [2] Eph. v. 32.

correspond with the graces of this state ; some enter it without the proper motives ; others embrace it without being called to it by Almighty God.

Q. Is a special vocation necessary, then, in order to secure salvation in the married state?

A. Most certainly ; for, if the state itself comes from God, as we have shown, and if the partner should be the choice of God, as we shall prove, evidently the individual who would safely enter the married state, should have a special vocation from God. "Houses and riches are given by parents ; but a prudent wife is properly *from the Lord*"[1] God made special choice of Rebecca to be the wife of Isaac : "Let the same be the woman whom the *Lord hath prepared* for my master's son;"[2] and Sara was God's choice as the wife of young Tobias : "The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, *and may he join* you together, and fulfil *his blessing* in you."[3]

Father Raineri, a standard authority in Catholic doctrine, says : "All admit that a particular vocation is necessary in order to en-

[1] Prov. xix. 14. [2] Gen. xxiv. 44. [3] Tob. vii. 15.

ter the ecclesiastical state, or the religious state; but, few persons are persuaded that a vocation is necessary to enter the married state; and yet, if there is in this world a state which no person should choose without a *very evident vocation from heaven*, it is assuredly the married state." Father Raineri then gives the reason of his doctrine: "People generally say that matrimony is the most difficult and the most austere of religions, and they are right; because this state imposes great obligations, painful trials, and very great dangers to salvation."

Q. Can you give a Scripture example illustrating this doctrine more forcibly?

A. Yes; those who think they may enter the married state without consulting the will of God, would do well to ponder attentively this terrifying incident related in the sacred scripture.

When the Angel Raphael advised young Tobias to take Sara for his wife, Tobias answered: "I hear that she hath been given to seven husbands, and they all died; moreover, I have heard that a devil killed them. Now I am afraid, lest the same thing should happen to me also."

The Angel then showed Tobias that those seven husbands had been given over to the power of the devil because, in matrimony, they lost sight of the designs of God, and were guided by unworthy motives. "The Angel Raphael said to him: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who *in such manner receive matrimony*, as to *shut out God* from themselves, and from their mind, and give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding; over them the *devil hath power*."[1]

Q. What is the doctrine of St. Bazil on this Subject?

A. St. Bazil says: "What means 'to marry in the Lord',[2] except to embrace that holy state *only* in *accordance* with *the will of God*, consulting only reason and faith to learn whether you follow the course to which *God calls you.*"

"A Sure Way To A Happy Marriage," is the title of a little book approved by ten bishops and archbishops; it is especially recommended in a late pastoral letter of Bishop Ryan of Buffalo. On page eight of this little book, we read: "Those who *have a vocation* to

[1] Tobias vi. 13, 17. [2] I. Cor. vii. 39.

the married state, and wish to enter it, will learn from this book how they should prepare themselves for christian marriage. In like manner married persons will find in it rules of conduct and directions for fulfilling the obligations of their state as christians." [1]

Q. What is the Saying amongst the old folks about Marriages?

A. There is a "Saying" among the old folks, that "Happy Marriages are made in Heaven"; (made by Almighty God). This saying is in fact the summing up of experience, of the teaching of the Fathers, and of the Sacred Scripture, on this subject.

If Jesus and Mary do not preside at marriages, the devil will surely usurp their place. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth."

Q. What does the Venerable Louis de Ponte teach on the subject of Matrimony?

A. The Venerable Louis de Ponte says: "God is not only the author of matrimony, but he brings to that state, by a *special providence,* those whom he *wishes to be in it.* He acts

[1] We would highly recommend this little book: "A Sure Way to a Happy Marriage." It is published by Benziger Bros. It should be in the hands of all who have entered, or who propose to enter the holy state of wedlock.

thus both for the good of society, and for the happiness of individuals ; and, although according to the teachings of the church, it is better and more perfect to observe virginity than to engage in matrimony,'[1] yet divine Providence is not less admirable in the matter of *vocations* to the *married state*, than in vocations to perpetual continence. It is then very important to weigh these matters maturely, and to examine whether a person is called to a more perfect state, before deciding to enter the married state."

CHAPTER V.

VIRGINITY.

Q. How is it proved that the state of Virginity is a vocation ?

A. St. Paul mentions virginity as a special state of life, and recommends it in preference to matrimony.

In the heading of the seventh chapter of the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, we find these words : "Virginity is preferable to a married state." In this whole chapter St. Paul

[1] Coun. Trent.

speaks strongly in favor of the state of Virginity: "I would that all men were even as myself. . . . I say to the unmarried, and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I . . . . I would have you to be without solicitude; he that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God; but he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married, thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak *for your profit;* not to cast a snare upon you, but for that which is decent, and which may *give you power to attend upon the Lord* without impediment."[1]

Q. Why is Virginity to be preferred to the married state?

A. Because Virginity is more pleasing to God, and more conducive to salvation.

Q. How do you prove that Virginity is more pleasing to God?

A. The Savior showed his preference for

[1] I Cor. vii. 7-38.

Virginity by being born of a Virgin Mother; He chose St. Joseph, a virgin spouse, as his foster father; St. John, the virgin disciple, was an especial favorite of Jesus; he alone was permitted to rest his head on the bosom of our Lord at the Last Supper; and to him the dying Savior intrusted the care of his beloved Mother: "Woman, behold thy son; behold thy Mother."

Q. Is there any other scripture proof of the advantages of virginity?

A. Yes; in the Book of Revelations, St. John says: "And I beheld, and lo! a lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father written on their foreheads; . . . and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth; these were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb."[1]

Q. Do the Fathers of the Church recommend Virginity?

[1] Rev. xiv. 1, 4.

A. Yes, in the highest possible terms. St. Augustine, explaining the above passage of St. John, says: "The joys of the virgins are not given to the other saints of God." St. Cyprian says: "Virginity is the queen of all other virtues, and the possession of every good."

Speaking of Virginity, St. Ephrem says: "If you have loved it, you will be favored by the Lord in all things." St. Bernardine of Sienna teaches, that "Virginity prepares the soul to see her spouse Jesus by faith in this life, and by glory in the next."

Q. What is the exact teaching of the Church on the relative merits of matrimony, and virginity?

A. In the Decrees of the Council of Trent, we find the following doctrine: "If any one shall say that the conjugal state is to be preferred to the state of virginity, or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or celibacy, than to be joined in matrimony, let him be anathema"; (that is accursed)![1]

[1] Sess. xxiv. Can. x.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THREE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS.

For the better understanding of vocations, we shall give a brief explanation of the Evangelical Counsels.

Q. What are the Evangelical Counsels?

A. They are gospel advices, or recommendations.

Q. Why are they called Counsels?

A. Because they are not commanded, but *counseled* by our Lord, and recommended as means of greater perfection.

Q. Why are they called Evangelical Counsels?

A. Because they are recommended in the *Gospel;*—Evangelium is the latin word for gospel.

SEC. I.—POVERTY.

Q. Which is the first of the Evangelical Counsels?

A. Voluntary Poverty. That means leaving all things, by our own free will, to follow Christ.

Q. What is the advantage of this Counsel?

A. The practice of this counsel uproots a most dangerous passion; "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition."[1]

"There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale."[2] And hence our Blessed Lord declares: "That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."[3] He says also: "Woe to you that are rich; for you have your consolation."[4] Now, these awful declarations lose their terrors, and the soul is placed in a more secure way to perfection by the practice of the counsel of voluntary poverty.

Q. Is there any special blessing promised to those who follow this Counsel?

A. Yes; a great blessing is promised in the following words: "Peter answering, said to him: Behold, we have left all things, and

[1] Tim. vi. 9. [2] Ecclus. x. 10. [3] Matt. xix. 23,24. [4] Luke vi. 24.

have followed thee ; what therefore shall we have ? And Jesus said to them : Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. *And every one that hath left* house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall possess life everlasting."[1]

Q. Is this Counsel given to all ?

A. The Fathers of the Church teach that this counsel is recommended to all. The above words of our Lord are unrestricted : "And *every one* that hath left houses, or brethren," &c.

SEC. II. PERPETUAL CHASTITY.

Q. Which is the second Evangelical Counsel ?

A. Perpetual Chastity : that is, a voluntary abstaining from marriage, in order to dedicate one's self in a more special manner to the love and service of God, and to the great work of salvation.

[1] Matt. xix. 27, 28, 29.

Q. Is this Counsel recommended in the Sacred Scriptures, and in the Fathers?

A. It certainly is, as we have seen in the chapter on virginity.

Perpetual Chastity is strongly recommended by our Lord. The substance of the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew is thus summed up in its heading: "Christ declares matrimony to be indissoluble; he recommends the making one's self an eunuch (voluntarily embracing a life of chastity) for the kingdom of heaven, and parting with all things for him. He shows the danger of riches, and the reward of leaving all to follow Him."

Q. Is this Counsel of Chastity recommended to all?

A. This Counsel, as well as the other two Evangelical Counsels, is recommended to all. The Fathers say that these words, "He that can take, let him take it," mean, he that is *willing* to take this Counsel, let him take it. And St. Paul says: "I would that *all men* were even as myself."

Commenting on these words: "He that can take, let him take it," Cornelius À Lapide says: "Here the Evangelical Counsel of Celibacy is promulgated by Christ, and proposed

to *all*; nay, even, counse_ed, but not commanded; for, St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom say: these words 'he that can take, let him take it,' are the words of one exhorting and animating to celibacy. Moreover, it is signified that, as Christ gives this counsel, it is in our power to fulfil it, if we invoke the grace of God, and earnestly co-operate with it. Nor does the expression, 'he that can take,' do away with the force of this; for all that this means is, that continence is a difficult thing; and he who is willing to put constraint on himself, let such a one embrace continence; 'let him take it.' All the faithful, then, have the power of continence, not proximate, but remote."

Again, commenting on the same Chapter, À Lapide says: "Christ in this place, as well as St. Paul (I. Cor. vii. 7.), advises and counsels continence to *every one* of the faithful (cuilibet fideli); but nothing can be advised and counseled except that which is in the power and good pleasure of man, with the grace of God; which grace God offers and is prepared to give to *every one that asks it;* —Cuilibet postulanti."[1]

[1] See Cornelius À Lapide, on St. Matt. xix.

Q. If this Counsel is recommended to all, why does our Lord say : "All men take not this word"?

A. St. John Chrysostom gives the answer : (Cornelius À Lapide says that St. Chrysostom speaks in the name of all the Fathers on this point) ; "Not all take this word, because not all are *willing*; the palm is set before them ; he who desires the glory, thinks not of the labor. No one would conquer, if all were afraid of danger." St. Jerome says : "The master of the games proposes the reward ; he invites to the contest ; he holds in his hand the prize of virginity ; he points to the most pure fountain, and cries out : he who thirsts, let him come to me and drink : 'he who can take, let him take it.' "

Q. If all are invited to the Counsels, have not all received vocations to the Counsels ?

A. No ; there is a difference between the *general invitation* to the counsels, and a *special vocation*. Our Lord, whilst inviting all to practice that which is most perfect, has, nevertheless, pity on human frailty, and is content to see the majority pursue a less exalted course. The general invitation is a desire of Almighty God, expressed to all men ; it is a privilege of-

fered to all, but not of obligation to all ; the special vocation is a particular manifestation of God's will. This is explained by St. Paul where he says : "I *would* that all men were even as myself ; but *every one* hath *his proper gift* from God ; one after this manner and another after that."

The simple invitation addressed to all in general, does not necessarily give the immediate power to follow the counsels ; but a vocation, which solicits the will by an interior grace, brings along with it all the helps necessary to embrace the particular state to which God calls us.

Although the general invitation may not give the *immediate* power to embrace the counsels, yet any one can obtain this power by prayer and other good works, which dispose the soul to receive more abundant grace.[1] The young man of the gospel received the grace to follow the counsels by merely stating to the Savior the aspirations of his soul, although he did not afterwards correspond to that grace : "All these have I kept from my youth, *what is yet wanting to me ?*" St. Mark gives us to understand that our Lord mani-

[1] See explanation on page 31.

fested pleasure at the good dispositions of this young man : "And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him : One thing is wanting to thee : go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow me."[1]

Q. Is not the gift of perpetual Chastity given to some, and not to others, as would appear from the words : "but they to whom it is given"?

A. St. John Chrysostom answers : "It is given to those who freely choose it. Our Lord spoke as he did to show the necessity of grace from above ; which grace is provided for all who seek it."

On the same question, À Lapide appropriates the following answer from a reliable author : "When our Lord says, 'to whom it is given,' it is not meant that it is given to some and not to others ; but he shows that unless we receive the help of grace, we have no power at all of ourselves. But grace is not refused to those who desire ; for our Lord says: 'Ask and you shall receive.'"

Q. Is there any other proof that the grace of Continence may be obtained by all ?

[1] Mark x. 21.

A. Yes; the learned Cornelius À Lapide gives the following as the doctrine of St. Chrysostom, Origen, St. Jerome, St. Augustin and St. Ambrose: "Although all the faithful may not have the gift of continence in the sense that they are actually continent; as all the just have not the gift of perseverance by which they actually persevere; yet as all the just have the gift of perseverance in such sense that they may persevere in God's grace, if they wish; so all the faithful may be continent, if they wish; namely, if they earnestly ask of God the strength and grace to be continent, and correspond with this grace by guarding the eyes, flight from idleness, mortification of the flesh, &c."[1]

Q. Does not the Church advise and encourage Matrimony, in preference to perpetual Chastity?

A. No: the Church holds matrimony in honor, and gives the proper instructions concerning it; yet she teaches that perpetual chastity is to be preferred to matrimony: At the head of the chapter on matrimony, in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the Fathers show an unmistakable preference for a life of

[1] See À Lapide on Matt. xix. 11.

continence, in these words: "As it is the duty of the pastor to propose to himself the holiness and perfection of the faithful, his earnest desires *must be in full accordance* with those of the Apostle, when, writing to the Corinthians, he says: 'I would that all men were even as myself'; that is" continue the Fathers of Trent, "that all embraced the virtue of continence. If there be any one blessing superior to every other, it surely falls to the lot of him who, unfettered by the distracting cares of the world, the turbulence of passion tranquillized, the unruly desires of the flesh extinguished, reposes in the practice of piety and the contemplation of heavenly things."[1] The marginal resumé of this paragraph in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, is: "A life of continence *to be desired by all.*"

SEC. III.—OBEDIENCE.

Q. Which is the third Evangelical Counsel?

A. Entire obedience; that is, a total subjection of one's own will to that of lawful superiors in all that is not sin.

[1] Catechism of Council of Trent, Page 225.

Q. What scripture warrant have we for this counsel?

A. The life of Christ was a continual model of perfect obedience. From twelve to thirty years of age, all that we are told of him in the sacred scripture is, that he was obedient to those whom his heavenly Father had placed over him. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was *subject* to them."[1] Thus does he show the importance of obedience. And as to obedience towards his heavenly Father, he says: "In the *head* of the book (in the beginning of his life) it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart."[2] And in the *end* of the book, or history of his life, it is written of him that, "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."[3] How important, then, is obedience: it is a most effectual means of subduing *self-will* and *self-love*, which are our most fatal enemies: "If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies."[4] But, on the contrary, "an obedient man shall speak of victory";[5] because obe-

[1] Luke ii. 51. [2] Ps. xxxix. 8, 9. [3] Philip ii. 8.
[4] Ecclus. xviii. 31. [5] Prov. xxi. 28.

dience draws down the most special and abundant graces ; for, so pleasing is it to God, that he says of it : "Obedience is better than sacrifices."[1]

Q. What practical conclusion may we draw from this explanation of the Evangelical Counsels ?

A. We frequently hear infidels and bad Christians speaking bitterly against monks, nuns and others, who devote themselves to the observance of these Counsels. Yet, is there anything in these three maxims of christian perfection to call for abuse or sarcasm ? Such worldly minded critics would do well to reflect on these words of Holy Scripture, representing the wicked repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, and saying within themselves, when they see the salvation of the just : " These are they whom we held some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor : behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints. Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined upon us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon

[1] I. Kings xv. 22.

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us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through *hard ways*, but the way of the Lord *we have not known*. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post (a message) that runneth on. . . . So we also being born, forthwith ceased to be, and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness. Such things as these the sinners said in hell."[1]

THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Q. Is there any scripture warrant for the religious state, as a special vocation?

A. Yes; the great theologian, Suarez, says: "The religious state, in its essential elements, was given to men and instituted directly by Christ himself; so that it is of divine right, not in the sense that God makes it imperative, but that he gives it as a counsel."

Q. What is the fundamental principle, or essence of the religious state?

A. The three Evangelical Counsels which

[1] Wisd. v. 1, 14.

we have just explained. Those who enter the religious state, take vows to observe the counsels of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.

CHAPTER VII.

ADVANTAGES OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Q. Why do so many people enter the religious state?

A. To escape the dangers of the world, and the more securely to work out their salvation; for, "They that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize. So run that you may obtain."[1] Our blessed Lord himself assures us that, "Many are called, but few are chosen."[2]

Q. Are not religious considered melancholy and unhappy?

A. Not at all; on the contrary, "As cheerful as a nun," has become a proverb. Even enlightened Protestants admit that no happier nor more cheerful persons exist than religious.

Q. Why are religious happier and more cheerful than others?

A. On account of their peace of mind, and

[1] I. Cor. ix. 24. [2] Matt. xx. 16.

their greater hope of the eternal rewards promised to those especially who leave all to follow Jesus Christ.

Q. How do religious acquire such peace of mind?

A. First; they comply better than others with the special helps of the Holy Ghost: "Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you."[1]

Secondly; "That peace which the world cannot give," flows from a good conscience, from temperateness and self-denial, as well as from the wonderful and uplifting influence of prayer and devotion; also from their gratitude to God, and the good will which religious cultivate towards all. The Angelic Heralds of the "Good Tidings" of Christmas morning intoned those thrilling words which will continue to be re-echoed by the Church till the end of time: "Glory to God in the highest; and *on earth peace* to men of *good will*."[2]

Q. In what other way do you explain the happiness enjoyed by religious?

A. There is a marvelous happiness to be found in holiness of life; because the various degrees of holiness are so many steps towards

[1] I. Peter v. 7. [2] Luke ii. 14.

God, the center and source of all happiness.

Were an unfinished statue, whilst under the hands of the sculptor, to have intelligence, and to express its feelings, doubtless it would manifest higher degrees of pleasure according as it approached the perfection of its original, notwithstanding the many and severe strokes of the hammer and the chisel.

So it is with man: He is rendered happier by every stroke that removes differences, and by every effort that brings him into closer resemblance to his God, no matter how painful the sacrifices made to attain this end; for, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."[1]

As in a family, not the "prodigal," but the humble and meek child, the docile and obedient child,—in a word,—the *best* child, is the happiest, in spite of the sufferings endured to restrain corrupt nature, and to practice virtue; so in the great christian family, the holiest are the happiest, no matter what pains the holiness may have cost.

In fact, is not the whole world a scene of strife for something better;—a contest for per-

[1] Rom. viii. 18.

fection, real or mistaken ? "And they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one."[1]

And yet that world is never at rest, notwithstanding its boasted degrees of material progress : There is a void in the human heart which even "the whole world" is not able to fill ; there is a craving there which earthly gratifications are not capable of satisfying ; for, in the words of St. Augustine, "Our hearts were made for thee, O God, and they will never rest till they rest in thee."

Hence, the only happiness on this earth capable of filling that immense void in our hearts, consists in "the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding."[2]

Q. How is this priceless happiness to be acquired ?

A. The Divine Master solves the problem ; for, the key is the cross : "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart ; and you shall find *rest* to your souls ; for my yoke *is sweet* and my burden *light*."[3]

Therefore, the happiness of the religious state is that "Treasure *hidden* in a field, which

[1] I. Cor. ix. 25. [2] Philip iv. 7. [3] Matt. xi. 29, 30.

a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."[1]

Q. What is the highest type of earthly happiness?

A. If happiness ever existed on this earth, it was certainly found in the Holy Family of Nazareth, notwithstanding their sufferings, their deprivations, and their separation from the tumult of the world.

The happiness of religious is an approach to the happiness of the Holy Family; for, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him*, and WILL MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM."[2]

Q. Are religious useful to others as well as to themselves?

A. Religious bring many blessings to mankind, by exercising the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and by "instructing many unto justice."

Religious follow in a special manner the admonition of the Apostle: "Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election."[3]

Besides making their own salvation more

[1] Matt. xiii. 44. [2] John xiv. 23 [3] II. Pet. i. 10.

secure, religious undoubtedly contribute to the salvation of thousands of souls.

Q. This thought is certainly very startling, but how can the matter be explained ?

A. Next after the priests of God, religious contribute much to keep up the faith, and the spiritual life of the Church.

The principal cause of the loss of innumerable souls is the want of early religious teaching, and religious training. By the various teaching communities of religious brothers and sisters, thousands are saved; for, in youth they acquire a love and a practical knowledge of their faith; they are nurtured in purity and piety; and they are enlightened and encouraged in habits of industry and sobriety.

The good which religious teachers accomplish, is not confined to one class, or to a life's work; for, through the pupils, the result of religious training will descend down to generations yet unborn.

Q. Can you illustrate this principle by particular instances ?

A. Yes; a certain religious sister, who is still living, has been instrumental in the hands of God in fostering vocations in numerous young

men, eight of whom have already become priests; and out of the number of girls taught and trained by her during thirty years, sixty-four have become religious sisters. These latter have been for years teaching, and moulding the characters of children, and thus protecting them against the deceitful snares of the world ; and besides the countless host of good christians prepared by them for the Church and for society, these sisters have, in their turn, fostered many vocations to the priesthood and to the religious state.

The number of persons attracted to the religious state by the late Mother Caroline, of Milwaukee, undoubtedly reaches the hundreds ; and the number drawn to religion by her spiritual children, means legion ; for the Community of which she was the chief inspiring angel, has surpassed the enormous number of two thousand members ; and the end of this wonderful process seems still far off.

In Father Abbelen's beautiful Biography of Mother Caroline, we read many such elevating sentiments as the following : "It was, above all, her ardent, faith-inspired love of children that gained their hearts and exercised an ir-

resistible influence over their affections. Thus did Mother Caroline unconsciously attract young girls and inspire them with a wish to become sisters."

Q. In what other way do religious contribute to the salvation of souls ?

A. From thousands of hospitals, and other asylums of mercy and charity, numberless souls go up daily to heaven, after having reformed their lives under the nursing hands, the hopeful words, and the prayerful hearts, of religious men and women.

If to these considerations we add the good example, the life of prayer and self-denial, led by religious, we shall not be astonished to see the mercies and graces of God multiply under their hands.

The secular and the religious states have their respective advantages ; but our Blessed Lord preferred the silent attention of Mary, to the anxious cares of Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."[1]

Q. Do not people deprive themselves of

[1] Luke x. 41.

many innocent pleasures by becoming religious ?

A. They renounce many things which worldlings call pleasures, but which in reality, do not deserve the name; "for, all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."[1]

As grown persons laugh at those toys and trifles which seemed very important to them when they were children, so religious wonder how people of the world can content themselves with affairs of so little importance. Aristotle, a pagan philosopher, says: "All men desire pleasure ; but, because the pleasures of the body are most known, and every one has a natural inclination for them, they have, in a manner, engrossed the name and title of pleasure, in so much that many are persuaded that no other pleasure can be delightful ; yet, this shameful and filthy pleasure is not properly to be accounted pleasure, for no one takes it for such except the sensual."

Q. What does St. Paul say of sensual pleasures ?

A. St. Paul says : "The sensual man per-

[1] I. John ii. 16.

ceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God ; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand ; because it is spiritually examined." [1]

St. Augustine says : "Where are the delights for which you walk your wicked ways ? I do not ask where will they be when this life is past ; but where are they now ? This day hath thrust out yesterday ; to-morrow will thrust out to-day. What does not pass away from you of all that which you love ?"

St. Bernard says : "The comfort of this world is base and worth nothing ; and, what is worse, a hindrance to true and wholesome comfort." "O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet." [2] " How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord . . . For, better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." [3]

[1] I. Cor. ii. 14. [2] Ps. xxxiii. 9. [3] Ps. lxxxiii. 2-11.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARKS OF A VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Q. Which are the marks of a vocation to the religious state?

A. No mark, or set of marks, is equally applicable to all; because God calls persons to the higher states in various ways; yet a firm will to enter religion is a safe mark of a vocation to the religious state, provided that the motives are good, and no serious obstacle exists. This firm will itself is a special grace of God; "for it is God who worketh in you both *to will* and to accomplish, according to his good will."[1] In the invitation to the Counsels the will is the only condition mentioned by our Lord: "If thou WILT be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."[2]

Common sense proves the same; for no one questions the vocation of a person who is determined,—who sincerely *wishes*,—to become a religious, if there is no impediment.

[1] Philip ii.13. [2] Matt. xix. 21.

Q. Is a firm will the only mark of a vocation to the religious state?

A. No; whilst this firm will is sufficient to decide the vocation of one person, the absence of it does not determine the calling of another; for, the grace of a vocation to a higher state may be offered to persons of weak will, as was the case of the young man of the gospel, who was evidently called to be a disciple of our Lord, but "he went away sad, for he had great possessions". His *will* was not *firm* enough to reject the temptations caused by the riches and pleasures of the world. Instead of corresponding to his vocation, he tried to hush the voice of conscience speaking to his heart.

Q. By what other mark may a person recognize a vocation to the religious state?

A. The interior voice of conscience, soliciting the will through the intellect, and suggesting the religious state, is a MARK OF A VOCATION, whether a person corresponds to it or not.

Q. But how are we to recognize this voice of conscience?

A. This voice of conscience, which is nothing but the grace of God speaking to the

heart, is heard and recognized in various ways: with some, it has been lingering in the heart since childhood; to others, it comes later and more suddenly. This prompting of grace may result from reading, from a sermon, a mission, a conversation, an example, the death of a friend or an acquaintance, or even from misfortune and disappointment. In a word, this interior voice may be occasioned by the thoughts and reflections of our own minds, no matter what caused these reflections.

CHAPTER IX.

EXAMPLES.—SHOWING THE DIFFERENT WAYS BY WHICH GOD CALLS PERSONS TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

ST. ANTHONY'S VOCATION.

Q. Can you give some examples showing the effects of this interior voice?

A. Yes; St. Anthony, hearing at Mass the words: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come,

follow me," became so inflamed with the desire of securing his salvation, that he gave away all his vast possessions, and led a long life of prayer and penance in the desert.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

By meditating on the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ, St. Francis of Assisi was filled with such a burning zeal for God and his neighbor, that he renounced his great wealth, and his right to an honorable inheritance, and spent his life in inflaming others with zeal for the salvation of souls.

CONVERSION AND VOCATION OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies, was converted from a worldly and sinful life, and received the grace of his high and holy vocation by the instrumentality of his friend, Ignatius of Loyola, who frequently repeated to him these words of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION AND VOCATION.

St. Augustine was converted, and drawn to

the religious life, by reading these words of the Apostle:"Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."[1] "I would read no further," said Augustine, "nor was there need; for with the end of this sentence, as if a light of security and confidence had streamed into my heart, all the darkness of my former hesitation was dispelled."

ST. FRANCIS BORGIA:—DISGUST FOR THE WORLD, AND RELIGIOUS VOCATION.—CAUSED BY A CORPSE.

St. Francis Borgia, while in the outer world, was employed in the service of the Empress, Isabella, of Spain. On the occasion of her death, he was deputed to accompany the body to Granada, where it was to be interred. On his arrival at that City. the coffin was uncovered, in order that Francis might certify on oath that it was indeed the body of the late Empress. But, behold ! the countenance was so hideous and disfigured by the ravages of death, that it was no longer to be recognized;

[1] Rom. xiii. 13.

while at the same time there issued from the corpse such a disgusting stench that the astonished spectators hastily withdrew. Whereupon, Francis cried out : "What has become of those eyes once so sparkling? Where is now the beauty and the graceful air of that countenance which we so lately beheld ? Are *you* her sacred Majesty, Isabella? Are *you* my lady, my Empress, my mistress ?" "Thus,"said he to himself, "end the greatness, and the royal dignities of the world. Henceforth I will serve a master who can never die." From that moment he consecrated himself to the love of Jesus crucified, making a vow to become a religious. This vow he afterwards fulfilled by entering the Society of Jesus, in which by his eminent sanctity, he became instrumental in drawing thousands of souls to God.

ST. TERESA'S VISION OF HELL.

St. Teresa saw in a vision the very place in hell to which her worldly life would have led her, had not the grace of God checked her dangerous career. "Since that time," says the saint, "all seems easy in comparison with one moment of such suffering as I there endured.

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In short, the torments of this world are no more than a mere picture, and the burning which is felt here, but a trifle in comparison with the fire of hell. I remained so astonished and amazed at it, and am so even now, though it happened six years ago, that at the very thought of it, my blood seems to chill in my veins through fear."

Saint John Capistran and the Students.

SERMON ON DEATH, WITH SKULL IN HAND.

After hearing the touching sermons of Saint John Capistran, hundreds of men and women renounced a worldly career, and earnestly devoted themselves to a life of prayer and penance.

Many of them brought their dice, cards, gambling tables, false hair, paint, and such like, to the public market place, and there burned them.

At Leipzig, in 1454, when this Saint preached on death, with a skull in his hand, one hundred and twenty students sought admission into various religious orders.

When this good Franciscan Missionary

preached at Vienna, fifty students entered the Order of St. Francis.

On another occasion, hearing the same Saint preach on the great truths of eternity, one hundred and thirty young men, mostly students, renounced the world and embraced the religious state.

Thus we see that the infinite wisdom of God supplies a variety of means of drawing souls to himself.

Q. What, then, is the principal difference in the feelings, or emotions, of those called to the religious state?

A. Some people, having their *will* inflamed with a love for the religious state, enter it with great pleasure, and without any question about the matter; others enter it only when their *understanding* has become so enlightened as to discover to them the vanity and dangers of the world, and when they see clearly the greater security of salvation in the religious state. These persons may even be somewhat dull in their affection for this state, and not so inclined, humanly, to follow that which reason and faith point out to them; in their lower, animal feelings, they may even experience a kind of repugnance to do what their

higher reasoning powers dictate to them. This second kind of vocation is better than the first, and more generally approved by those who are experienced in such matters; for, being grounded on reason and faith, it is less subject to error, and more likely to attain the crown of perseverance. To illustrate: We sometimes feel a repugnance to our work, and to the performance of other duties; again, our animal feelings often suggest anger, impatience, revenge, sensuality, &c.; but the higher law of our minds, our *reason*, aided by the grace of God, overrules these baser inclinations. In this sense St. Paul said: "I am delighted with the law of God, according to the *inward* man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members."[1]

Q Is it allowable, then, to use reason in this matter?

Yes; because reason is a precious gift which God has bestowed upon us for such purposes. In the prayer of the missal, for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, we read: "Grant, we beseech thee, O Almighty God, that con-

[1] Rom. vii. 22.

tinually meditating on those things that are *reasonable*, we may accomplish, in words and in deeds, those things that *are pleasing* to thee." In the same sense, the Holy Ghost says: "O that they would *be wise* and *would understand*, and would provide for their last end."[1]

Wisdom and *Understanding*, are numbered among the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The lack of wisdom and understanding, the want of serious thought, fills hell with innumerable souls; for, "with desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that *considereth* in the heart."[2]

Q. Which are the proper motives for entering the religious state?

A. The first motive should be the greater security of our own salvation. The second, to promote the glory of God by a good life, and by contributing to the salvation of others.

Q. Which are the impediments to entrance into religion?

A. The ordinary impediments are: ill health; unsuitable age; and the obligation of supporting helpless parents.

[1] Deut. xxxii. 29. [2] Jer. xii. 11.

CHAPTER X.

DOUBTS ABOUT A VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

VIEWS OF ST. IGNATIUS AND ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

Q. What should be done by a person who thinks of entering the religious state, but fears that he may not be called to it by Almighty God?

A. St. Ignatius, the Founder of the Jesuit Order, gives an excellent answer to this question: He says: "If a person thinks of embracing a secular life, he should ask, and desire more evident signs that God calls him to a secular life, than if there were question of embracing the Evangelical Counsels; for our Lord himself has evidently exhorted us to embrace his counsels; and on the other hand, he has as evidently laid before us the great dangers and difficulties of a secular life; so that if we rightly conclude, revelations, and extraordinary tokens of his will, are more necessary for a man entering upon a life in the world, than for one entering the religious state."

This sentiment is in keeping with those terrible words of our Lord: "Woe to the world because of scandals."[1] And also with the words of the Apostle: "See therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."[2]

Our blessed Lord assures us that, "no man can serve two masters."

Q Can you quote other reliable authority on this matter of uncertain vocations?

A. Yes; Lehmkuhl, a standard Theologian, says: "In order that a person may safely embrace the religious state, *probable* signs of a vocation are sufficient, together with a firm will of fulfilling the obligations to be assumed."

On this subject, St. Francis De Sales says: "To have a sign of a true vocation, it is not necessary that our constancy be sensible; it suffices if it be in the SUPERIOR part of our soul. And therefore, we must not judge that a vocation is not a true one, if a person does not feel those sensible movements which he felt in the beginning, even should he feel a repugnance and coldness, which sometimes bring him to waver, and to make it appear to

[1] Matt. xviii. 7. [2] Ephes v. 15.

him that all is lost. It is enough that the will remains constant in not abandoning the divine call, and also that there remains some affection for this call. To know whether God will have a person become a religious, it is not to be expected that God *Himself* should speak, or send an angel from heaven to signify his will. It is not necessary that ten or twelve confessors should examine whether the vocation is to be followed. But it is necessary *to correspond* with the *first movement* of the inspiration, and *to cultivate it*, and then not to grow weary if disgust or coldness should come on. If a person acts thus, God will not fail to make all succeed to his glory. Nor ought we to care much from what quarter the first movement comes. The Lord has many ways of calling his servants."[1]

ILLUSTRATION : THE LEAKY SHIP.

Q. Can you place the above doctrine in a clear light by an illustration ?

A Yes ; suppose that you are in a foreign country ; you are selecting a vessel on which to return to your happy home, where numer-

[1] Entretien 17.

ous friends anxiously await you. Two ships are about to launch out into the deep. The numerous passengers congregating on the one, are merrily singing, laughing, and keeping step to the gentle strains of the sweetest music. They have on their vessel every source of amusement ; every means of gratifying their desires is at hand. But, in their craze for company and amusement, they pay little attention to the fact that their ship is old and creaky, and has many leaks. The proper authorities fear that it is unsea-worthy. Experienced seamen say that it may never reach its destination.

The other ship is strong and safe; but it has not such a large and fascinating crowd of passengers. It has not so many means of gratifying sensuality. Fewer, but more refined people are entering it. From its quiet air, and frugal fare, this vessel seems less inviting, at least exteriorly ; yet no one doubts that it will cross the Ocean in safety. Which of these two vessels would you select ? Common sense as well as reason, gives the answer. —We are all in the foreign land of this world ; our happy home is heaven, where true friends await our arrival ; the boisterous Ocean is the short span of this life ; the dangerous ship is

a life in the world, especially when chosen from human considerations; the safe ship is the religious state, which is embraced, indeed, by a smaller number, but conducts more securely to our eternal home; for, "how narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it."[1]

CHAPTER XI.

INDUCING OTHERS TO ENTER THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Q. Is it allowable to exhort, or induce others to enter the religious state?

A. St. Thomas, the Angel of the schools, gives an unmistakable answer to this important question. He says: "Those who induce others to enter religion, not only commit no sin, but even merit a great reward; for it is written: 'He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins;'[2] and, 'They that instruct many to justice shall

[1] Matt. vii. 14. [2] James v. 20.

shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii.3.)"

The ninth Article of the same question of the Summa thus concludes: "Laudabile et admodum meritorium est, ex charitate et veraciter, ad religionem aliquos inducere."

Q We know that St. John Chrysostom, as well as St. Thomas, eloquently defended the religious state; what does this holy and learned Doctor say on this point?

A. St. Chrysostom says: "If we knew that a place was unhealthy and subject to pestilence, would we not withdraw our children from it, without being stopped by the riches that they might heap up in it, or by the fact that their health had not as yet suffered? . . . Among seculars, shipwrecks are more frequent and sudden, because the difficulties of navigation are greater; but with anchorites, storms are less violent; the calm is almost undisturbed. This is why we seek to draw *as many as we can* to the religious life."

Q. St. Jerome read every known author of his time, and summed up in himself the doctrine of all; what does he teach about exhorting others to embrace the religious state?

A. Nothing can be more forcible and

[1]Summa; 2. 2. q. 189.

touching than the letter of St. Jerome to Heleodorus, exhorting him to quit the world. The Saint weeps, begs, reproaches, exhorts, and enters into poetical praises of solitude: "I invite you; make haste. You have made light of entreaties; perhaps you will listen to my reproaches. Effeminate soldier! what are you doing under the paternal roof? Even though your nephew entwine his arms around your neck; even were your mother, with streaming hair, to show you through her rent garment, the breast that nurtured you; even if your father were to throw himelf across the threshold of your house, step over the obstacle, and with unquivering eye, rush to take your place under the standard of the cross. Lo, your sister presses you in her arms; your attendants, your grandmother, your tutor, exclaim: Wait a while until we are dead; bury us before you go;—love for God, and fear of hell easily break all chains. O solitude, all spangled with the flowers of Jesus Christ! Blessed retreat where one enjoys familiarity with God. Brother dear, what are you doing in the world, which is so far less than you? Do you fear hardship? What athlete was ever crowned without a struggle? It is my love

for you, O Brother ! that has urged me to say these things, to the end that, on judgment day, you may share the glory of those who now live amid the holy rigors of penance."

Q. Does St. Augustine teach the same doctrine ?

A. Yes ; St. Augustine says : "I have been passionately fond of the perfection of the Evangelical Counsels ; with God's grace I have embraced them. With all the power I have, I exhort others to do the same ; and I have companions whom I have succeeded in persuading".

Q. What does St. Bernard teach concerning this question ?

A. Enumerating the advantages of religious, above persons living in the world, St. Bernard says : "They live more purely ; they fall more rarely ; they rise more speedily ; they are aided more powerfully ; they live more peacefully ; they die more securely, and they are rewarded more abundantly."

"The influence which St. Bernard exercised by his letters and burning words, was so effectual, so irresistible, that he was soon surrounded by a company of young men, who

not only changed their way of life, but bound themselves to him to follow the holy path which God had traced out for him.

"Among these noble-hearted men, there was one whose conversion was remarkable. A young nobleman, named Hugh, had been Bernard's school-fellow and early friend. A happy sympathy in thought, taste, and sentiment, had bound them closely to each other; and their souls, ever in harmony, vibrated in unison like two strings of the same lyre. But when Hugh heard of Bernard's change of life, he was cut to the heart, and he wept as if he had forever lost him who was dead to the world. Both the friends now sought each other, but with different motives. Hugh hoped to draw Bernard back to the brilliant career of this world; Bernard hoped to gain his friend's soul to God. An opportunity of meeting occurred; both were deeply moved, and they embraced each other with tears. It was some time before they could speak. At last they broke silence; but, before they had exchanged many words, Hugh's soul melted into Bernard's, and pressing him to his heart, he protested that he would live henceforth to

God alone, and that they should be ever united in Jesus Christ."[1]

His biographers tell us that the doctrine and eloquence of St. Bernard concerning the religious state, were so powerful and convincing, that when he preached, mothers concealed their sons, and wives hid their husbands, and companions kept their friends out of Bernard's way, because he persuaded so many to renounce the world and to embrace the religious state.[2]

Q. Is entrance into the religious state more important for some than for others ?

A. Yes ; according to the preceding doctrine, especially from the teaching of St. Liguori, and St. Gregory the Great, there are many persons who will not be saved unless they embrace the religious state. Others are permitted, and may even be exhorted, to enter religion, even though God should be satisfied to see them embrace a less perfect state. This last proposition is evident from the *ex-*

[1] Life and times of St. Bernard ; by the Abbe Ratisbonne.

This excellent book would prove most useful to religious, and to all who wish to learn the true principles and the happiness of an interior life. The thoughts which it suggests are as elevating as the doctrine is instructive.

[2] The teaching of these four Doctors on this subject is given more fully in Father Berthier's "Christian Life and Vocation," a work approved by the Master of the Sacred Palace.

tensive nature of the invitation to the Counsels ; and this is evidently the mind of the Church, since she defends for Christians in general, the privilege of entering religion, and allows this privilege even to those who are promised in marriage. "A life of continence is to be desired *by all*." [1]

It is not permitted to exchange a state of life for a less perfect one ; but it is allowable to aspire to the higher states. "Be zealous for the better gifts, and I show unto you yet a more excellent way." [2]

CHAPTER XII.

MEANS OF PRESERVING A VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE ;—SOME OBSTACLES.

Q. Which are the means of preserving a vocation whilst preparing to enter the religious state ?

A. Prayer, retirement, and promptness in entering religion.

Q. Why is retirement, or seclusion from

[1] Catechism of the Council of Trent. [2] I. Cor. xii. 31.

the world, necessary in order to preserve the grace of a religious vocation?

A. Because an apparently trifling circumstance often causes the loss of such a vocation. A day of amusement; a word from a friend; an unmortified passion; or a conversation, especially with a person of the opposite sex, often suffices to bring to nought the best resolution of giving one's self entirely to God.

Q. Why should a vocation to the religious state be followed promptly?

A. St. John Chrysostom, as quoted by St. Thomas, says: "When God gives such vocations, he wills that we should not defer even for a moment to follow them; for, when the devil cannot bring a person to give up his resolution of consecrating himself to God, he at least seeks to make him defer the execution of it; and he esteems it a great gain if he can obtain the delay of one day, or even of one hour." "Because," continues St. Liguori, "after that day, or that hour, other occasions presenting themselves, it will be less difficult for the devil to obtain greater delay, until the person, finding himself more feeble, and less assisted by grace, gives way altogether, and loses his vocation."

St. Jerome gives this advice to those who are called to quit the world: "Make haste, I beseech you, and rather cut than loosen the rope by which your bark is bound fast to the land."

Q. What other reason may be given why a religious vocation should be followed promptly?

A. Like other graces, the grace of a religious vocation is transient; it may be offered to-day, and if not accepted, it may be withdrawn to-morrow: "*To-day* if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts."[1] "Exhort one another every day, whilst it is called *to-day*, that none of you be hardened through the *deceitfulness* of sin."[2]

The following terrible words may be applied to the neglect of vocation, as well as to the neglect of other graces: "Because I called, and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded: You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions; I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared: When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand; when tribulation and distress shall

[1] Ps. xciv. 8. [2] Heb. iii. 13.

come upon you ; then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear ; they shall rise in the morning and shall not find me."[1]

Q. Are children obliged to obey their parents in the choice of a state of life ?

A. St. Liguori says : "It is *certain* that, in the choice of a state of life, children are not bound to obey their parents ; thus St. Thomas and the other Doctors teach unanimously."

Q. Should children consult their parents before entering the religious state ?

A. They may consult them, but they are not bound to follow their advice. In regard to matrimony, the knowledge and experience of parents may be helpful to children ; but regarding the religious state, parents have little knowledge, and no experience. Their marriage duties, their cares and attachments, usually make them disinclined towards the religious state, and therefore, they may be prejudiced against it.

The ever practical St. Alphonsus says that, however plausible may be the theory to the contrary, as a matter of fact, parents usually try to prevent their children from entering the religious state. Both parents and chil-

[1] Prov. i. 24—28.

dren should remember the reply of the apostles to the unjust rulers who had forbidden them to preach Christ crucified: "We ought to obey God rather than men."[1]

Q. What is to be thought of parents who oppose children that wish to enter the religious state?

A. Speaking of religious vocations, St. Thomas says: "Frequently our friends according to the flesh are opposed to our spiritual good."

St. Liguori says: "Parents often prefer to see their children damned with themselves, rather than to see them saved away from them."

On this subject, St. Bernard exclaims: "O hard-hearted father! O cruel mother! Unfeeling souls! you are not parents, you are murderers; for you grieve to see your son saved, and you rejoice at the sight of his eternal perdition."

This is one of the ways in which, as our Lord tells us, "A man's enemies shall be they of his own household."[2] Hence, the touching admonition of the Holy Ghost is particularly applicable to a person called to the religious state: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline

[1] Acts. v. 29. [2] Matt. x. 36.

thy ear; and forget thy people and thy father's house."[1]

Again, Our blessed Lord says: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."[2]

CHAPTER XIII.

MAY CHILDREN ENTER THE RELIGIOUS STATE?

Q. At what age may children enter the religious state?

A. With the consent of their parents, children may enter the religious state whenever circumstances permit; but without this consent, they should not enter until they are in their "teens."

By popes and councils, and notably by the ruling of the Council of Trent, young persons are permitted to take their vows in the religious state at the age of sixteen, after making at least one year's novitiate.

The mind and the spirit of the Church show that youth is the best time to make this agreeable sacrifice to God; and even the Holy

[1]Ps. xliv. 11. [2]Matt. x. 37.

Ghost himself testifies to the same: "It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth." [1]

Q Do not a larger percentage persevere when subjects enter the religious state late in life?

A. Yes, because a smaller percentage enter late.

When these youth are left to the mercy of so many enticing and dangerous influences, with their passions growing within them, and an enchanting world smiling upon them; when others around them are "marrying and giving in marriage"; when all are speaking of the world, and thinking of the world, and interested in the ways of the world, they will naturally be influenced by the moral atmosphere in which they live: "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Q. Is it then a mistaken principle to try the vocations of young persons by permitting them to acquire experience in the ways of the world, before entering the religious state?

A. Yes; because, "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." [3]

[1] Lam. iii. 27. [2] Prov. xxii. 6. [3] Ecclus. iii. 27.

Facts confirm this doctrine ; for if, through their own fault or through the fault of their parents, those having vocations to the religious state, remain in the outer world until the end of their "teens," most probably the vast majority of them lose their vocations and stay in the world.

Persons having thus lost their vocations, usually live worse lives than other christians, on account of the abuse of grace.

In given instances, when children are unable to pursue a religious vocation at an early age, the greatest precaution should be taken both by themselves and by their parents to keep alive those higher and holier inspirations which the Holy Ghost diffuses more liberally at the age of First Communion, and for about two or three years afterwards.

Q. Does not the Holy Ghost diffuse such special graces with equal liberality later in life ?

A. If such special graces have not already been abused, the Holy Ghost may offer them at any time ; but later in life, this divine seed does not usually find such well prepared soil in the heart.

The early lessons of faith and piety, and of

the fear and love of God, easily become effaced by contact with the world.

Q. Does Our Lord manifest any special preference for children?

A. Yes; He makes the conduct of children the standard for all who would be saved: "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."[1]

Although young and innocent children did not need, or obtain special cures, like those who were troubled with divers diseases, yet, see the evident preference which Our Lord shows for these little ones: "And they brought to him young children, that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked those that brought them. Whom when Jesus saw, he was much displeased, and said to them: Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for, of such is the kingdom of God."[2]

Q. What practical conclusion may be drawn from these words of Our Lord?

A. Commenting on these words of the gospel, St. John Chrysostom says: "If children are driven from Christ, who will deserve

[1] Matt. xviii. 3. [2] Mark x. 13, 14.

to go near him? Now, it is evident that we get near Jesus Christ mainly by the practice of the counsels. Children, therefore, should not be kept from Christ by hindering them from practising these counsels."

Q. What is the doctrine of St. Thomas with regard to religious vocations in the young?

A. On this matter, St. Thomas says: "This teaching is clearly the outcome of what occurs every day among men. For, do we not see children put early to those avocations, arts, or trades, which they are to follow in after-life? Candidates for the sanctuary begin in youth to acquire the knowledge which will help them later; those destined for a military career are trained to arms from their early years; and the future tradesman is apprenticed when only a boy. Why, then, should a rule, so well observed in other spheres, be neglected in the case of the religious life? I say even more: when a state of life is attended with many difficulties, the greater is the need to habituate one's self from youth to overcome them. Hence we read in Jeremias: 'it is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth.'"[1]

[1] Opusc. 17. c. iii.

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EXAMPLE.

When St. Bernard and his brothers were bidding a final adieu to their home and their father, they saw their youngest brother at play with other children in the castle yard. The oldest brother embraced him, saying: "My little Brother Nivard, do you see this castle and these lands? Well, all these will be yours, —yours alone." "What!" replied the child, with more than a child's thoughtfulness, "are you going to take heaven for yourselves, and leave earth for me? The division is unequal." From that moment, the little Nivard could not be restrained by his father, his relatives, or any human influence. He joined St. Bernard, who, with his brothers and companions, to the number of thirty, set out for the Monastery of Citeaux.

CHAPTER XIV.

DUTY OF PARENTS REGARDING THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN.

Q. Are not some parents unjust towards

children that wish to enter the religious state ?

A. Yes ; unfortunately, some parents are both unjust and unreasonable with their children in this matter.

Q. How is this unjust and unreasonable conduct of parents more clearly shown ?

A. When there is question of marriage with a rich or an influential person, many parents not only make no objection, but even urge the matter, whether such a marriage is the will of God or not ; and yet, when children are evidently called by Almighty God to higher and holier states,—to become spouses of Jesus Christ,—these same parents object, and place obstacles in the path of their children.

Such conduct, then, is not only unjust and unreasonable, but it is even unchristian ; for, how can such parents claim to be in sympathy with the ordinary teachings of christianity ; such as, " Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his justice." "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul ?"

Many parents, having allowed their own faith to become deadened by contact with the world, lose sight of the snares and pitfalls be-

fore the feet of their children.

Q. Why is the conduct of such parents to be regretted as a great misfortune?

A. Because they not only injure themselves and their children, and hinder many designs of God, but they also lose golden opportunities of extending the kingdom of God on earth. They do not even attach any meaning to the Lord's Prayer: "THY KINGDOM COME; THY WILL be done ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

Q. In this matter of religious vocations, how can parents extend the kingdom of God on earth?

A. By removing obstacles, and by religiously encouraging children that may wish to embrace the religious state; for thus they will contribute to the immense harvest of souls that will be saved by their children: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest."[1]

Q. Is the help of parents particularly needful to children deliberating about the religious state?

A. Yes; because, no matter how good these children may be, their young and tender

[1] Matt. ix. 37 38.

hearts, like pliable wax, are susceptible of any kind of impressions. The devil who, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," does not neglect his special harvest time ; namely, from First Communion time, until these young persons are settled in some state of life. These children bear within them the growing germs of concupiscence ; their hearts cannot rest without love ; the time approaches when they must love some kind of life, or some person, besides home and parents ; for, the family tie must be broken.

At this critical point of life, these tender and pliable hearts are almost entirely in the hands of parents. Will they mould them for God, particularly when he makes special demand for them ; or will they allow the world, the flesh, and the devil, to do their deadly work ? Children are very apt to over estimate the advantages of the WORLD. The "FLESH", and the "DEVIL", are not easily subdued.

Q. Can you relate an example illustrating this important matter ?

A. Yes ; in the beautiful Life of St. Bernard, by the Abbe Ratisbonne, we read how even this saintly youth was tempted between his

school days, and his religious profession. "Now began his trials. Hitherto, his chastity, protected by piety and modesty (the two guardians assigned by grace and nature to that precious virtue), had suffered no assault; but the charms of the world, into which he had just entered, excited his senses, and strongly allured a heart full of simplicity, and but too open to outward impressions. He happened one day to cast his eyes upon a woman whose bewitching beauty had struck him. Bernard experienced a new sensation; his startled conscience awoke in terror; he feared lest the dart should be mortal, and fled at once, he knew not whither; he ran on till he came to a frozen pond, plunged boldly into it, and stayed resolutely in the water until he was drawn out half dead. An act of such resolution was followed by the happiest results; his triumphant virtue acquired fresh strength, and, from that moment, rose more and more above all sensual influences."

Q. Have parents any precise obligations in this matter; or is there merely question of advice?

A. The duty of parents in this matter is of strict obligation. These words of the Apostle

apply in a special manner to parents: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."[1]

It is certainly as important for parents "to have care of their own" when there is question of a religious vocation, as when the child is destined for a life in the world. Just as parents who neglect the care of children whom Providence has destined for the weighty obligations of the married state, are responsible for the loss of faith, or for any other evil in those children, or in their posterity, when that evil is traceable to the parents; so those that neglect the care of children destined by the Almighty for the religious state, are responsible, not only for their own children, but also for those innumerable souls that would be saved by these children both directly and indirectly.

Q. In what other way may parents advance the cause of God in the matter of religious vocations?

A. That irresistible love which always finds an echo in the heart of the child, the charming gaze, the attractive manner, the

[1] I. Tim. v. 8.

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meek forbearance, the exalted teaching, as well as a life of faith, prayer, and other virtues, are so many powerful influences for good, placed by Providence at the disposal of christian parents.

Q. These are certainly powerful influences, but how are they to be applied to religious vocations?

A. These high-born qualities in the parents will shield the children from the well known seductions of "the world, the flesh, and the devil"; for, having the source of true happiness at home; namely, love, parental, God-like love, the children will not be tempted to seek happiness amongst worldly-minded companions, or from other dangerous sources.

Q. In what other way will the above named qualities enable parents to attain the desired end?

A. Parents with the above qualifications, will imperceptibly impress upon the minds of their children the truths of faith, in opposition to the maxims of the world; so that children of such parents will see with the eyes of faith; for, "blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God;" they will see and fulfil the designs of God; they will not

only *know*, but *fruitfully understand* the shortness of life, the dangers and deceitfulness of riches, the fading nature of earthly beauty, the treachery of friends, the baseness, and the short duration of sensual pleasures, the remorse following sinful habits, the swiftness of death, the severity of judgment, the eternal duration of rewards and punishments.

Q. What is the usual result of such parental training?

A. Hearts thus prepared are easily inflamed with that divine fire which Christ came to cast upon the earth: "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?"[1]

Such children do not hesitate "to choose the better part;" for, the parental, and the divine love moulding those hearts, having consumed the dross of earthly affection, enables them to seek earnestly the "one thing necessary."

[1] Luke xii. 49.

CHAPTER XV.

PREVENTING VOCATIONS.

Q. Do parents commit sin in preventing their children from entering the religious state?

A. If children themselves incur imminent danger of losing their souls by neglecting a divine vocation, parents that prevent a vocation to the religious state, incur the danger of damning both themselves and their children. Such parents will have to answer also for the eternal loss of all those souls that their children would have saved in the religious state.[1]

Q. What is the exact teaching of theology with regard to parents preventing their children from entering the religious state?

A. St. Liguori gives the following, not only as his own doctrine, but as the teaching of theologians in general: "Parents who, without a just and certain cause, prevent their children from entering the religious state, cannot be excused from mortal sin; and not only parents, but any one who prevents

[1]See calculation on pages 46, 47

another from following a religious vocation, sins mortally." (Et non solum parentes, sed quicumque alius qui abducit proximum a vocatione religiosa, peccat graviter, ob grave damnum quod illi affert.[1])

Q. Is there any definite way of settling the difference of opinion which often arises between parents and children in this matter?

A. Yes; not only the mind and the spirit of the Church, but also the positive teaching of the Church, is very clear on this subject. The Fathers of the Council of Trent teach that, if they *wish*, children may take vows in the religious state at the age of sixteen, after making at least one year's novitiate; and the same Fathers most sacredly protect the rights of these children; for, in the eighteenth chapter of the twenty-fifth session, we learn that the Fathers of Trent hurl an anathema against *any one* who, without a just cause, prevents females from embracing the religious state.

Q Does God, even in this life, punish parents for having prevented the higher vocations of their children?

A. Yes; in punishment for thus thwarting

[1]Homo Apostolicus; Tract. 13; N. 25.

His designs, God often punishes parents by some misfortune; such as, the premature death, or by the reckless life of their children.

Q. Is not long deliberation, as well as the advice of many friends, necessary in order to avoid mistakes?

A. St. Thomas says: "Long deliberation and advice are required in doubtful matters, but in those things which are certain and evident, no counsel is required.

"When there is question of entering the religious state," continues the Angelical, "three things may be considered:

"First, as to the question in itself, it is certain that to enter the religious state is better than not to enter it; and he who denies this, gives the lie to Christ who has given this counsel. Hence, St. Augustine says: 'Jesus Christ calls you, and you prefer to listen to a mortal man subject to error.'

"Secondly, the strength of him who is about to enter religion should be considered. Here also there is no room for doubt, because they who enter religion do not rely on their own strength, but on the divine assistance, according to the words of Isaias 'they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall

take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."[1] If, however, some special impediments exist; as, corporal infirmities, debts, or the like, there should be deliberation; and advice should be taken from those who are favorable to your cause, and who will not oppose it.

"In the third place, a person may consider what order he should select, and how he should enter it; and in such matters he may consult those who do not oppose his project".[2]

St. Thomas concludes his article on the religious state, with these beautiful words: "It is a sweet yoke, and those who bear it on their shoulders, have the promise of being one day consoled by the delightful enjoyment of God, and the eternal repose of the soul."

[1] Isaias xl. 31. [2] Summa. 2. 2. Q. 189. Art. 10.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRIESTHOOD.

Q. By whom was the priesthood instituted?

A. By our Savior Himself: After His resurrection, our Lord appeared to His apostles and said to them: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth; going therefore, (because I have power to send you) teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."[1]

Q. Is the priesthood necessary?

A. Yes; because priests are "the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."[2] Without the priesthood the Church could not exist; and hence we would be deprived of the great means of grace; as, the Holy Mass, the sacraments, the preaching of

[1] Matt xxviii. 18, 19, 20. [2] I. Cor. iv. 1.

the word of God, &c. ; faith would become weak, and religion would soon disappear.

Q. Which are the principal advantages of the priesthood ?

A. Priests not only "preach the gospel to every creature", but they are ambassadors of God, appointed to vindicate his honor and proclaim his glory. "We are ambassadors for Christ," says the Apostles, "God, as it were, exhorting by us".[1] Priests act as constant intermediators between God and his people. They perpetuate the Sacrifice of Calvary by constantly offering the Mass for the living and the dead. They heal the wounds of sin, and absolve the penitent sinner. They administer the last consolations of religion to the sick, and soothe the sorrows of the dying ; by their works of mercy and charity, and by their preaching and teaching, they prevent people from forgetting the great end for which they were created ; and thus, co-operating with their Divine Master, they go on happily, together with the flock intrusted to their care, to the enjoyment of their eternal reward: "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me."[2]

[1] II. Cor. v. 20. [2] John xvii. 24.

Q. Is the power of the priesthood very great?

A. There is no power on earth, nor even among the angels of heaven, so great as that of priests. They have power over the real body of Christ, in the Holy Mass, changing bread into his body, and wine into his blood. And they have power over the mystic body of Christ, that is, over the faithful, loosing them from the bonds of sin, in virtue of these words: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."[1]

Q. What is to be thought of the dignity of the priesthood?

A. The sublime dignity of the priesthood is evident from the great power of priests, and from the very office which they hold; for, they continue the same work which Christ began on earth: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you."[2] Of them our Lord said: "He that heareth you heareth me". Hence a priest has been well called "Alter Christus," another Christ.

St. Ignatius, Martyr, says: "The priesthood is the most sublime of all created dignities."

[1] John xx. 22, 23. [2] John xx. 21.

St. Bernard speaks of the priesthood in the following terms: "The son of God, in calling man to that eminent dignity, places him above the kings and emperors of the earth; he exalts him even above angels and archangels, thrones and dominations." St. John Chrysostom says: "Though its functions are performed on earth, the priesthood should be numbered among the things of heaven".

Q. In what manner, principally, does a priest promote the honor and glory of God?

A. By the celebration of the Holy Mass, in which he offers Jesus Christ in sacrifice, a priest gives greater honor to the Lord, than if all men, by dying for God, offered to him the sacrifice of their lives. By a single Mass, he gives greater honor to God than all the angels and saints give him; for, their worship cannot be of infinite value like that which the priest offers to God in celebrating Mass.

VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

Q. Is it necessary to have a special vocation in order to enter the priesthood?

A. Yes; for St. Paul says: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was."[1] Our Lord

said to his disciples: "You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and have *appointed* you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain."[1]

CHAPTER XVII.

MARKS OF A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

Q. Which are the marks of a vocation to the priesthood?

A. The principal marks are: 1–, a virtuous life; 2–, a pure intention; 3–, a desire of becoming a priest

Q. Are not great talents necessary in order to enter the priesthood?

A. No; a person of ordinary talents may become a very useful and successful priest.

Q. Why is a virtuous life necessary in one who aspires to the priesthood?

A. St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, gives the following reasons: "We must place the sublime burden of the priesthood only on walls already dried by sanctity; that is, freed from the malignant humor of sin."[2] In another place,

[1] John xv. 16. [2] 2–2. q. 189.

the holy Doctor says : "As he who takes orders is raised above seculars in dignity, so should he be superior to them in sanctity."

Q. What is meant by a pure intention ?

A. The intention of securing one's own salvation, and of promoting the glory of God by contributing to the salvation of others.

Q. What is meant by the desire to become a priest ?

A. It means an interior feeling or impulse of grace, inclining a person towards the priesthood.

Q. Is this desire a necessary mark of a vocation to the priesthood ?

A. This desire should sooner or later manifest itself, at least in some degree ; it must exist at least as a wish, or willingness ; for no one should receive Holy Order against his will. This desire is stronger in some than in others.

Q Does this desire manifest itself as plainly as other marks of a vocation ?

A. No ; because this desire is a more special gift of the Holy Ghost : "The Spirit breatheth where he will."

Q. How may this desire be obtained ?

A. By considering the goodness of our Blessed Lord ; his life of zeal and labor, and his burning desire to save souls; the honor,

and the reward of continuing his work; by meditating on some passage of the sacred scripture, or the truths of eternity ; by reflecting on the shortness of life, and the dangers of secular pursuits.

Q. May this desire be acquired by external means ?

A. Yes; this desire may be the result of a sermon ; of the instructions of pastors and teachers ; or of advice and example. It may come also from the prayers, the good example, and the encouragement of parents.

Q. How may a person know that this desire comes from God, even indirectly ?

A. He can judge by the motives which prompt this desire : a person evidently has a divine vocation when his desire of becoming a priest is fairly continuous ; when the motives are good, and no serious obstacle exists.

Q. If this desire should become very weak, would this be conclusive evidence that a person is not called to the priesthood ?

A. No ; because this desire, together with the grace of a vocation, may be lost through neglect, indifference, or attachment to the things of this world, as happened to the young man of the gospel, who evidently had

some kind of a desire to become a disciple of our Lord ; to this desire the Savior attached a divine vocation ; but the young man lost this special grace: "He went away sad, for he had great possessions".

Q. If this desire should not exist at all, would this be a sign that one is not called to the priesthood ?

A. No ; because God expects parents and priests to implant this desire in the minds of youth, and to foster, develop and encourage its growth.

Q. Is it right to force or urge children to become priests ?

A. No ; it is wrong to force, or unduly urge children to become priests, because the vocation must come from God, at least indirectly ; yet parents and others may become instrumental in the hands of God in bringing about vocations to the priesthood, by religiously and prudently directing the thoughts, and inclining the minds of youth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DO VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD COME DIRECTLY FROM GOD?

Q. Is it necessary that vocations to the priesthood should come directly from God?

A. No; comparatively few vocations come directly from God; for God usually acts through secondary causes. If God were to call a person to the priesthood by the direct influence of grace, such a person would have an *extraordinary* vocation. Generally speaking, God selects and prepares his ministers through those whom he has appointed to watch over the interests of his Church. Even St. Paul did not receive his vocation directly from God. He was converted directly; but to his question: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he received this answer: "Arise, and go into the city, and there *it shall be told thee* what thou must do."[1] God made use of Ananias to communicate to St. Paul his vocation.

[1] Acts. ix. 7.

Q. Did all the other apostles receive their vocations directly from our Lord?

A. No; in their first call, several of the apostles were brought to our Lord by indirect means: St. Andrew and St. John the Evangelist were sent to the Savior by St. John the Baptist: "Ecce Agnus Dei: Behold the lamb of God. And the two disciples *heard him* (John the Baptist) *speak*, and they followed Jesus." [1]

"He (Andrew) findeth first his Brother Simon, and said to him: We have found the Messias; and he *brought* him to Jesus".

"On the following day he (Andrew) would go forth into Galilee, and *he findeth* Philip. Philip *findeth* Nathanael, and said to him: We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth." At first there is a disagreement of views and sentiment between Andrew and Nathanael; so that Andrew had to use pursuasion to bring Nathanael to his own way of thinking: "And Nathanael said to him: Can anything of good come from Nazareth? Philip saith to him: Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming

[1] John i. 36.

to him, and he saith of him : Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. Nathanael saith to him : Whence knowest thou me ? Jesus answered and said to him : Before that *Philip called thee*, when thou was under the fig-tree, I saw thee."[1]

Many excellent subjects,—many a Nathanael, —"in whom there is no guile", may be found loitering under the fig-tree of the world, awaiting some zealous Philip "to call" them to Jesus.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOSTERING VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD—THE FATHERS OF THE COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, ON FOSTERING VOCATIONS.

Q. Is it allowable for priests, parents, teachers, and others, to foster and encourage vocations to the priesthood in the youth committed to their care ?

A. It is not only allowable, it is in some measure, a duty.

Q. How is this proved ?

A. The Fathers of the late Plenary Council

[1] John i. 41, 48.

of Baltimore, after the example of the Fathers of the Council of Trent, give very clear and practical instructions on this matter. The Fathers say: "Since a priest usually is in after life, what he gave promise in youth of becoming; and 'a young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it' (Prov. xxii. 6), it is certainly of great importance that the future ministers of the Church, from their tenderest years, be well grounded in piety and learning by the most careful study.—Wherefore we exhort in the Lord and earnestly entreat pastors and other priests, that they would diligently turn their minds to searching after and finding out, among the boys committed to their care, such as are fit for the ecclesiastical state, and seem called to it. If they find any boys of good disposition, of pious inclination, of devout and generous minds, and able to learn; who also give reasonable hope that they will serve God continually in the sacred ministry, they should nourish the zeal of such; they should assiduously foster these precious germs of vocation; in their paternal charity they should instruct such boys in piety and in the elements of knowledge, incite them to study, and with

solicitude, shield them from the contagion of the world ; they should admonish the parents themselves that, provided the children show signs of a true vocation, they (the parents) should religiously incline them towards the ecclesiastical state ; (parentes ipsos moneant ut filios dummodo signa verae vocationis ostendant, ad igrediendum statum clericalem sancte *inducant*); finally they (the priests) should endeavor to remove the obstacles which often arise from the poverty of the family."[1]

We see from this clear and beautiful instruction from the Fathers of the Council of Baltimore, that young boys are not supposed to know with any kind of certainty whether they are called to the priesthood or not. They are to be assisted in this matter by the zeal and the superior knowledge of those placed over them.

[1] See Third Plen. Coun. Balt. Page 70; N. 136.

CHAPTER XX.

PARENTS BLAMABLE FOR NOT FOSTERING VOCATIONS.

Q. Are not some parents to be blamed for their indifference, or their opposition, with regard to higher vocations in their children?

A. Yes; the Fathers of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore gently rebuke certain worldly-minded parents for not fostering vocations to the priesthood in their sons. Deploring the lack of such vocations, the Fathers say in their Pastoral Letter: "We fear that the fault lies in great part with many parents, who, instead of fostering the desire, so natural to the youthful heart, of dedicating itself to the service of God's sanctuary, but too often impart to their children their own worldly-mindedness, and seek to influence their choice of a state of life, by unduly exaggerating the difficulties and dangers of the priestly calling, and painting in too glowing colors the advantages of a secular life. To such parents we would most earnestly appeal, imploring them

not to interfere with the designs of God on their children, when they perceive in them a growing disposition to attach themselves to the service of the altar.

"If God rewards the youthful piety of your sons by calling them to minister in his sanctuary, the highest privilege he confers on man, do not endeavor to give their thoughts another direction. Do not present to your children the priesthood in any other light than as a sublime and holy state, having, indeed, most sacred duties and most serious obligations, but having also the promise of God's grace to strengthen and sustain human weakness in their fulfilment, and the divine blessing, here and hereafter, as their reward. To those whom God invites to co-operate with him, in the most divine of all works, the salvation of souls, the words of Christ to his Apostles are applicable: 'Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and every one that hath left house, or brothers or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a

hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting.'"[1]

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW OTHERS MAY ENCOURAGE VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

Q. How may other persons, besides priests and parents, increase the number of vocations to the priesthood?

A. By establishing burses (scholarships), or in some way supplying the means of educating deserving students. The best subjects for the priesthood are often found among the poor. It is not fair to say that poverty is a sign that they are not called to the priesthood; we should rather fear that those who have wealth, may not be making the proper use of their "stewardship." Our Lord, in choosing his apostles, evidently preferred the poor; and the history of the Church shows that many of the best and most successful priests came from the ranks of the poor. In this matter, the Fathers of the Council of Trent manifest a de-

[1] Past. Let. Sec. Plen. Coun. Balt.

cided preference for the poor: "Pauperum autem filios praecipue eligi vult."

Q. Can you give instances of persons who have fostered vocations to the priesthood?

A. Yes; an aged and venerable priest of Orleans, France, when about to die, gave expression to this beautiful thought: "I am eighty-three, and shall soon die; I have not done all the good I would; but one thing consoles me; I leave after me thirty-three priests whom I have formed to the ecclesiastical state; they will do better than I have done."

One of these thirty-three, on the silver jubilee of his priesthood, had around him twenty-five priests in whom he, in turn, had fostered vocations to the ecclesiastical state. He had been a disciple of the aged priest, who on the day of his ordination, said to him: "Always have pupils in your presbytery; you will be their angel, and they will be yours."

Many good priests of our own time and country, have zealously fostered vocations to the priesthood, and have, in a pecuniary way, assisted numbers of deserving young men to become priests.

See Appendix: "How Parishes May Establish Scholarships."

CHAPTER XXII.

DOUBTS ABOUT A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

Q. What should be done by a young man when he cannot satisfy his mind about his desire ; a sense of duty urges him to become a priest ; and yet, he does not feel certain that his wish, or desire, comes from God ?

A. St. Liguori points out an excellent help to arrive at a safe conclusion in such a case : He quotes from a wise theologian, the learned continuator of Tournely : "If any one presents himself for Holy Orders without any vicious affection, and with the sole desire of being employed in the service of God and the salvation of his neighbor, we may believe that he is called by God."

Thus we see that the MOTIVES, and the GOOD LIFE, give a safe basis of judgment.

Q. If a young man still has doubts about his vocation, what should he do ?

A. St. Liguori gives the answer in this case also : "In order that a person aspiring to the priesthood may be free from fault, it is sufficient that he have the proper end in view, and that

he offer himself to his bishop to be approved, provided he does not know for certain that he is not called by God."[1]

CHAPTER XXIII.

PREVENTING VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

Q. Is it a sin to prevent a person from following a vocation to the priesthood?

A. Yes; because, as we have seen, the salvation of one who does not follow his vocation is greatly endangered; also because, in such a case, the designs of God would be thwarted.

The late Archbishop Lynch, of Toronto, is authority for the statement, that the average priest secures the salvation of five thousand souls. This means that, on the average, for every young man that becomes a priest, there will be five thousand souls less in hell, and five thousand more in Heaven for all eternity. Hence, he who prevents a vocation to the priesthood, will be responsible for the loss of numerous souls.

[1] Lib. 6; Tract 1; N. 73.

Q. Is it right to pray for the grace of a vocation to the priesthood?

A. Certainly; this grace, as well as other special graces, may very appropriately be made the object of prayer: Our Lord, pointing out the great number of souls to be saved, said to his disciples: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few; *pray ye therefore* the lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into the harvest."[1]

Many parents have, by fervent, humble and persevering prayer, obtained for their sons the grace of being called to the sublime dignity of the priesthood.

Q. When a young man ascertains that he is called to the priesthood, is his vocation finally decided?

A. No; because the secular priesthood, and the religious priesthood, are distinct states of life, each having its advantages and its responsibilities; and therefore a special vocation, and special graces are necessary for each of these states. Hence, in deciding between these two states, a person should employ the same means, and take the same precautions which he previously used from the beginning of his study of vocation.

[1] Matt. ix. 37, 38.

CHAPTER XXIV.

END TO BE KEPT IN VIEW IN THE CHOICE OF A STATE OF LIFE.

Q. In the choice of a state of life, should we keep in view principally the advantages of the world; such as, the acquisition of wealth; the comforts of the body, and the gratification of the senses?

A. No; because, "We have not here a lasting city; but we seek one that is to come"[1]. "Nature inclineth a man to creatures, to his own body, to vanities, and to running to and fro; but grace draweth to God and to all virtues, renounceth creatures, flieth the world, and hateth the desires of the flesh."[2]

The following words of St. Paul are applicable here: "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if, by the spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live".[3]

The terrifying question of the Prophet Isaias has made many a person in earnest in the choice of a state of life: "Which of you can dwell

[1] Heb. xiii. 14. [2] Imitation. [3] Rom. viii. 13.

with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"[1]

Q. What end, then, should we keep before our eyes, in choosing a state of life?

A. In choosing a state of life, our eternal salvation should be steadfastly kept before our eyes; because, the first truth taught us by our holy religion is, that we are created to know, love, and serve God in this life, and be eternally happy with him in the next. Now, as we have seen, our eternal salvation is closely interwoven with our state of life. Earthly advantages, and sensual gratifications, are small matters when viewed in the light of eternal truths. "It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God".[2]

This warning of our Lord should never be forgotten: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?"[3]

And St. John says: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 14. [2] Imitation. [3] Matt. xvi 26.

of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world."[1]

CHAPTER XXV.

MEANS OF KNOWING OUR VOCATION.

FIRST MEANS: PRAYER.—St. James says: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."[2]

This wisdom, according to Cornelius À Lapide, is the knowledge of our last end, and of the means of attaining it. Young people without experience, and having yet to choose a state of life, have great need of this wisdom. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.[3]

Prayer is the DIVINELY APPOINTED MEANS of obtaining grace. "Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full."[4] "You have not, because you ask not."[5] "Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue

[1] I. John ii. 15. [2] James i. 6. [3] Matt. xxi. 22.
[4] John xvi. 24. [5] James iv. 2.

with perseverance."[1] "Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.[2]

"Who is the man that can understand his own way?"[3] God alone knows both the obstacles, and the helps that you are to meet in your way. Cry out then with the Royal Prophet: "Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk; for I have lifted up my soul to thee".[4]

St. Liguori says: "We should pray earnestly to God to make known to us his will, whatever may be the state he has in store for us. Do not fail to recommend yourself in a special manner to our holy Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary, beseeching her to obtain for you the grace perfectly to fulfil the will of her divine Son."

"In all your doubts and anxieties," says St. Bernard, "think of Mary, call upon her name."

SECOND MEANS: FREEDOM FROM SIN.—When mortal sin reigns in the soul, it acts like a dark cloud, veiling from us the light of heaven; "For wisdom will not enter into a

[1] Judith iv. 2.
[2] Matt. vii. 8.
[3] Prov. xx. 24.
[4] Ps. cxlii. 8.

malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins."[1]

"Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you."[2] "The way of the wicked is darksome ; they know not where they fall."[3]

"The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God ; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand ; because it is spiritually examined."[4] God loves to communicate himself to those whose hearts are free from the defilements of sin : "Blessed are the clean of heart ; for they shall see God."[5] "The clean of heart" shall see God, not only in heaven, but even in this life, they shall see him in his works, and recognize his providence in all his designs : "To them that love God, all things work together unto good."[6]

Hence, he who wishes to ascertain the state of life which he should embrace, ought to keep himself constantly in the friendship of God : "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."[7]

[1] Wisdom 1, 4. [2] Isaias lix. 2. [3] Prov. iv. 19. [4] I. Cor. ii. 14.

[5] Matt. v. 8. [6] Rom. viii. 28. [7] Jam. iv. 8.

THIRD MEANS: HUMILITY.—"Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord."[1] "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."[2] "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and he will not depart till the most High behold."[3]

FOURTH MEANS: RETREAT.—God loves to communicate his choicest favors in the silence of retreat: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart."[4]

If you cannot make a regular retreat, at least avoid all dissipation of mind; retire into the solitude of your heart, after the example of St. Catherine of Sienna, and other saints; always remembering that God is near you, and that he wishes to speak to your heart.

FIFTH MEANS: COUNSEL.—My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done."[5]

Your best adviser is your confessor. Through his own vocation he receives special helps from God. In the Litanies, Jesus is invoked as "*Light of Confessors*;" and the

[1] Prov. xvi. 5. [2] James iv. 6. [3] Eccli. xxxv. 21.
[4] Osee. ii. 14. [5] Eccli. xxxii. 24.

Blessed Mother of God is invoked as "Queen of Confessors."

To know and to do God's will in the choice of a state of life, is a grace which parents should earnestly invoke upon their children, even from infancy ; and it is important that the children themselves, especially from the time of their First Communion, should daily ask of God the grace to know their vocation.

For this purpose they would do well to say daily three Hail Marys, or the following beautiful Prayer of St. Bernard, which might be very appropriately said in common ; for, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD.

Remember O most pious and compassionate Virgin Mary, that from all ages it is unheard of that any one was forsaken who, placing himself under thy maternal protection, implored thy assistance, and begged the favor of thy prayers. Animated with the confidence which this inspires, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins and Mother of my God, and in the bitterness of my sorrow I throw myself at thy feet. O Mother of the Eternal Word, despise not my humble supplication, but listen graciously, and mercifully grant me the request, which from my heart I make to thee ; Amen. (An Indulgence of Three Hundred Days.)

APPENDIX.

HOW PARISHES

MAY

ESTABLISH SCHOLARSHIPS.

BY A PRIEST OF THE

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION.

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY,

NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y.

HOW PARISHES

MAY

ESTABLISH SCHOLARSHIPS.

BY A PRIEST OF THE

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION.

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY,

NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y.

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1895.

Cardinal's Residence,
408 N. Charles St.,
Baltimore, April 13, 1893.

Rev. Dear Father :

I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 12th, with the Circular entitled, "How Parishes may Establish Scholarships."

I hope your laudable enterprise will be successful, and will receive God's blessing, as it has mine.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

✠ JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS.

Rev. Father Downing, C. M.

ARCHBISHOP FEEHAN'S APPROBATION.

Chicago, 11th Sept., 1893.

Rev. and Dear Father,

I cordially approve your Circular, "How Parishes May Establish Scholarships."

I hope your desire may be fully realized.

Yours faithfully,

✠ P. A. FEEHAN,
Archbishop of Chicago.

Rev. Father Downing, C. M.

Rev. Dear Sir:

I have looked over your manuscript of a little brochure entitled, "How Parishes may Establish Scholarships," and approve the plan proposed; and I will be delighted if you, good zealous Priests coöperating, will suceed in getting it into efficient working shape.

Yours respectfully,

✠ S. V. RYAN,

Bishop of Buffalo,

Buffalo, April 6, 1893.

Rev. D. J. Downing, C. M.

HOW PARISHES

MAY ESTABLISH SCHOLARSHIPS.

Among those committed to their charge, pastors often find boys who manifest signs of a vocation to the priesthood, but who have no means of acquiring the necessary education.

The question may be asked : is poverty an evidence that a person is not called to the priesthood ? It would seem not ; because the Savior himself was poor, not having "where to lay his head." He recommended voluntary poverty as a special means of perfection. He chose his apostles from among the poor, and promised special blessings to the poor : "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In the Litany of the Holy Name, the faithful are taught to invoke Jesus as "*Father of the Poor.*"

God undoubtedly exercises a special providence over the poor, hearing their very "*de-*

sire," and even "the *preparation* of their heart." "To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little?" Isa. lxvi. 2. "He that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his maker." Prov. xvii. 5.

Numerous priests in every age have come from the poorer, or middle classes. In fact, comparatively few vocations to the priesthood are found among the rich. Their riches seem to be an impediment to such a grace. The young man mentioned in the gospel evidently had a divine vocation to become a disciple of our Lord: "Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and *come, follow me.*" But he did not correspond with the grace of that vocation. Why? The evangelist gives the reason: "He went away sad; *for he had great possessions.*" Mat. xix. 22.

The mind of the Savior concerning the rich is manifest from his own words: "Woe to you that are rich; for you have your consolation." Luke. vi. 24. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." Luke. xviii. 24. Hence poverty *is not an evidence* that a person has no vocation to the priesthood.

On the contrary, God evidently manifests a preference for the poor and humble, as instruments in the accomplishment of his greatest designs. " See your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble ; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise ; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong." I. Cor. i. 26-27.

In the same chapter St. Paul gives the reason of God's choice in such matters : "That no flesh should glory in his sight."

History proves that many of the most zealous and successful ecclesiastics of every age were of poor and humble origin.

When the requisite signs of a divine vocation are manifest, God sees the pecuniary means *somewhere.* If Providence had directly placed these means in the hands of the person called, his vocation might be lost, and God's designs concerning him frustrated, as happened to the young man of the gospel, mentioned above.

Although the promptings of grace may be rejected, God *does prompt* many persons to apply their means to purposes of this nature ;

and facts prove that this voice of grace receives a generous response from many a faithful heart. "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." Mat. xxv. 40. "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." Luke xvi. 9.

Christ evidently ordained that the church, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, should perpetuate itself. But vocations enough for this purpose are not found among people of means. Hence it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is some kind of an obligation on the part of the people to help on toward the priesthood those having evident marks of a vocation to that sublime dignity, but possessing little of this world's goods.

Many zealous pastors would gladly help the struggling ones of their flock who aspire to the priesthood ; but they are prevented because they have no practical plan or method of accomplishing so laudable a design.

To such pastors, or others that may be interested, the following suggestions are respectfully submitted.

THE PLAN.

1. Two hundred and seventy five persons, each contributing ten cents a week, will have contributed, in the short period of three years and a half, five thousand and five dollars ($5005). This amount is sufficient to establish a burse, or perpetual scholarship. Let this sum be deposited in a college, to be used, or funded. The interest of $5000, at 4% per annum, is $200, enough to pay the annual tuition of a student : and, as the fund will continue for all time, the interest also will be perpetual.

As bishops are usually willing to adopt students after a six years' course, this plan would give a new priest to the church every six years.

The applicant should be required to promise that, after ordination, he will say Mass for his benefactors, whether living or dead, once every week for six years ; or at least for as many years as he shall have been on the scholarship : at the end of which time, the next priest ordained from the scholarship should begin, and should continue to say Mass for the benefactors every week for six years, and so on continuously. In this way the Masses

for the benefactors, as well as the scholarship, would be perpetual.

2. On the same basis of calculation, four hundred and eighty one persons will have established the scholarship in two years.

3. Nine hundred and sixty two contributors will have accomplished the same work in *one year.*

4. The contributions might be made monthly, and a longer time taken to establish the scholarship ; but, from the suggestions of experienced ecclesiastics, the weekly contributions seem preferable. Contributors, however, may give their share of the scholarship monthly, annually, or all at once.

5. Let the pastor get as many subscribers as are willing, and complete the scholarship whenever circumstances will permit.

In case the pastor should not succeed in procuring the whole amount of a scholarship, the applicant, or his friends, should pay annually the difference between the tuition and the interest on the amount deposited.

COLLECTING.

The pastor might appoint one collector for

every twenty subscribers, and a superintendent to look after the whole work.

Where the subscribers are numerous, there should be a superintendent for every twenty collectors. The superintendent should collect from the collectors, or at least see that the contributions are given to the pastor regularly every week He should also, when necessary, supply the places of collectors from a list of names approved by the pastor.

If deemed advisable, the collectors might be organized into a society.

THE STUDENT.

The pastor should always have the right of selecting the student. He might send one who has no means, or two who could pay half the tuition each; or, he might determine his choice of a boy by merit, considering his moral as well as his intellectual worth. In this way the boys of the parochial school might be spurred on to healthy emulation.

ADVANTAGES.

What motives should induce the people to contribute to such a cause?

1. Zeal for the extension of God's kingdom on earth, as well as the hope of reward, should animate the heart of every true Christian. Thousands manifest their zeal by works of charity in its various forms, and by aiding in the corporal works of mercy. Others employ their means in helping their pastors to build churches, schools, asylums, and other edifices, to the glory of God, and for the salvation of souls.

If it is a great and meritorious work thus to enable the priest of God to accomplish so much good, how great shall be the reward of those who give to the church the priest himself who will inflame many other hearts with similar desires, and spend his own life in works of mercy, charity and religion! "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity." Dan. xii. 3.

Those who procure to the church a good priest, instruct, through him, thousands of souls. These, in their turn, will instruct many others; and thus the good will continue down to generations yet unborn.

2. Religion teaches that one of the ends of the sacrifice of the Mass is, "to obtain *all graces and blessings* through Jesus Christ." It

is a notable fact that the people are very much influenced by having their share in frequent Masses. Their own experience, as well as their faith, teaches them that their little offerings to procure the blessings of the holy Mass, bring back to them manifold benefits even in temporal matters. "The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich." Prov. x. 22.

3. This plan furnishes one of the best ways of utilizing temporal means; for, the conditions of contributing are light and easy, and the time required to complete a great work is short; but the results, both in perpetuating the priesthood, and in the blessings of the Mass, continue for all time, and extend even to enternity. "If thou have much give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little: for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity; for alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." Tob. iv. 9.

4. The practical working of this plan, as well as its results, will remind the people of the higher motives that should influence them in making their wills. Bequests left for temporal purposes are of little advantage compared

to one Mass, or to the life-work of a good priest. "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil." Ecclus. xxix.15.

An experienced bishop lately remarked, that more individuals would establish scholarships, if the advantages to themselves and to the church were explained to them.

RICHES AND RESPONSIBILITY.

It is true that, relatively to one another, we are masters of our temporal possessions ; but, with regard to God, we are only stewards of these goods, and shall be called to a strict account for the use which we shall have made of them. "Give an account of thy stewardship." Luke. xvi. 2. "What hast thou that thou hast not received ?" I. Cor. iv. 7.— "Good things and evil, life and death, *poverty* and *riches*, are from God." Ecclus. xi. 14.

These truths show that God is sovereign master of whatever we possess, and that we are obliged to use the goods of this world according to his will. That riches are given only in trust, is evident also from the parable of the talents, and from the punishment of the un-

profitable servant , Mat. xxv. In fact, the more we possess of these goods, the greater shall be our account ; for, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." Luke. xii. 48.

For those who have the means, the Holy Ghost pronounces it a great evil not to help the needy. "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom ; pride, fulness of bread, and abundance ; and they did not put forth their hand to the needy, and to the poor." Ezechiel. xvi. 49.

BLESSINGS ON THE GOOD USE OF RICHES.

I. Temporal. "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want." Prov. xxviii. 27 "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord ; and he will repay him." Prov. xix. 17. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor ; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." Ps. xl. i. "Some distribute their own goods, and grow richer." Prov. xi. 24.

2. Spiritual. "He that showeth mercy to the poor, shall be blessed." Prov. xiv. 21. "Thy

prayers and thy *alms* are ascended for a *memorial* in the sight of God." Acts. x. 4. "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person ; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee." Tob. iv. 7.

From almost every diocese in the country the cry is heard : "We need more priests." Every year some of the laborers in the vineyard go to their reward. New congregations are continually springing up on every side, and representing their wants to their respective bishops. The harvest of souls is daily increasing. Many souls are perishing, having no one to break to them the bread of life. "The harvest is great, but the laborers are few." How could a person better employ his means than by making them instrumental in continuing the mission of Jesus Christ on earth ?

It has been estimated, according to the late Archbishop Lynch, that the average priest is instrumental in procuring the salvation of five thousand souls. This computation gives an idea of the untold good that can be done by the proper use of temporal means. "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth ; where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves

break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven ; where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." Mat. vi. 19. 20.

The above points being offered as *suggestions*, pastors are, of course, at liberty to change details of the plan to suit particular views, or circumstances.

With regard to the people, the plan is intended for encouragement and instruction. Hence it is thought advisable to have copies distributed to the contributors. Copies are especially necessary for the collectors, to enable them to give the proper information to others.

This plan having been electrotyped, any number of copies of the Appendix in Pamphlet form, will be supplied by the Publisher for the mere cost of printing.

1657

Questions on Vocations

AUTHOR

TITLE

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	DATE RETURNED